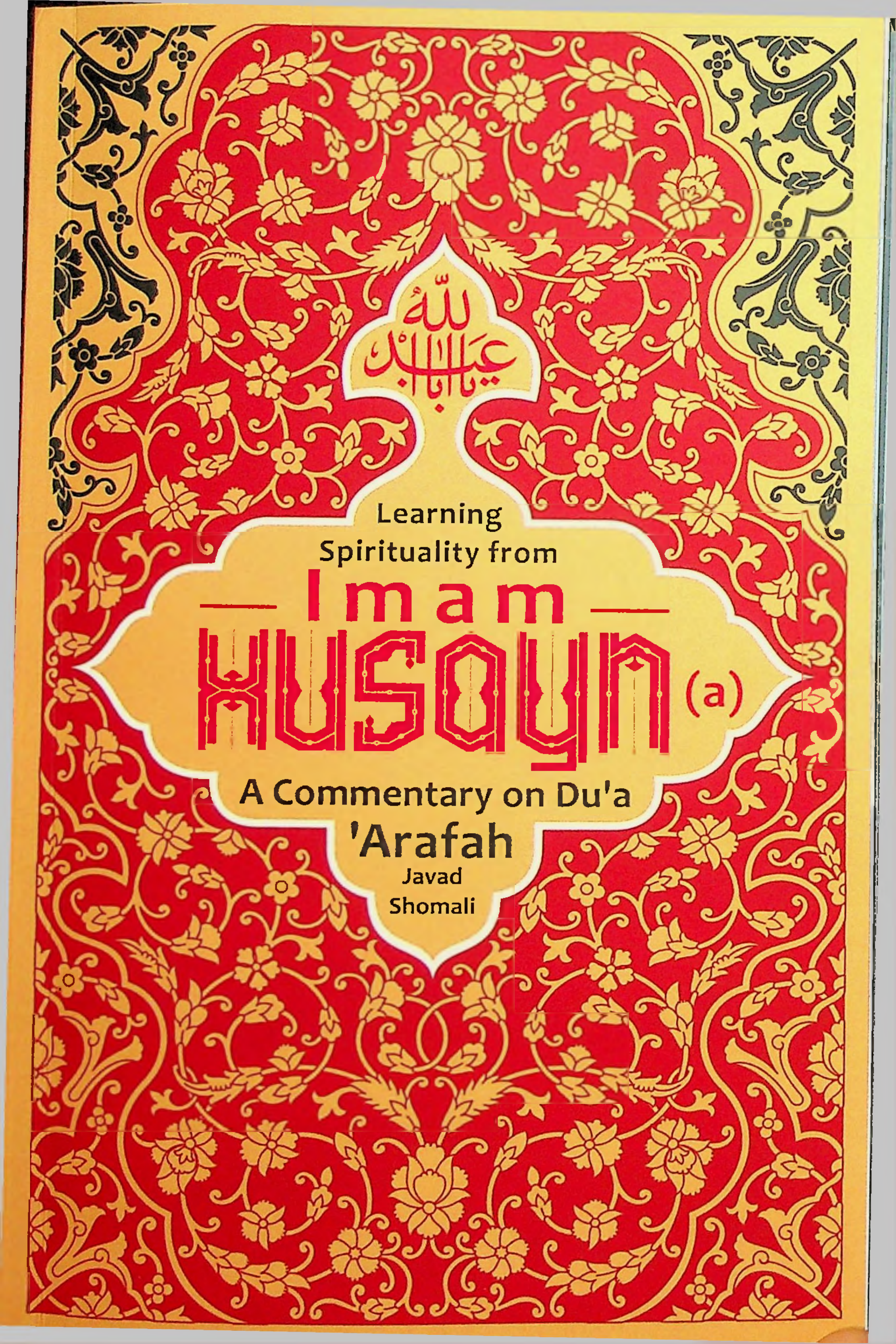

يا أبا عبد الله
Learning
Spirituality from
Imam
Husayn (a)
A Commentary on Du'a
'Arafah
Javad
Shomali


يا ابا عبد الله
Du'a
'Arafah
"There are very few texts that can match
the depth of Du'a Arafah of Imam Husayn.
Whatever secrets there are about tawhid, knowing God, the truth
of 'ubudiat, and the reality of existence are mentioned in this du'a.
The du'a is very comprehensive yet very concise. The text is not easy to
understand as the Imam was in a very special state and only his special companions
were around him." Ayatullah Shojaei (the student of Allamah Tabatabai)
We hope this commentary helps you unlock the beautiful gems
reserved in the du'a for those who come to it with an open heart.
This du'a can change your life, and fill your
moments with God's presence and love.
All it asks for is your
attention.
ISBN 9781739805432
90000
9 781739 805432



In the Name of God

the Most Loving, the Most Merciful

Learning Spirituality from Imam Husayn (a)

A Commentary on Du‘a ‘Arafah

Javad Shomali

Learning Spirituality from Imam Husayn

A Commentary on Du'a 'Arafah

Javad Shomali

Editor: Shaahid Jaffer

ISBN: 978-1-7398054-3-2

First Edition: 2022

Instagram @mjshomali

www.javadnzahraa.com

Table of Contents



Introduction

This book was born out of my preparations for a lecture series to be given in the first ten days of Muharram a few years ago. I had an inspiration that it might be a good idea to explore hidden aspects of Imam Husayn's life by discussing Du'a 'Arafah.

Usually people only recite this du'a on the day of 'Arafah[1] to gain reward, without paying much attention to its actual content. This is a shame, because as you will see for yourself in the forthcoming chapters, there is so much beauty and wisdom in this du'a.

This du'a has the power to change our relationship with God and Imam Husayn (a) forever. As we read its lines, we start to really feel God's infinite love for us. We also begin to gain a greater understanding of Imam Husayn (a). Unfortunately, for many of us, our knowledge of Imam Husayn (a) is limited to the last 10 days of his life and the events of Karbala. We rarely hear about his life prior to that; how he lived, his

---

[1] The day of 'Arafah is the 9th of Dhul Hijjah, one day before Eid al-Adha. It is one of the most virtuous days of the year and has been highlighted in many narrations as a special time of forgiveness and prayers. Reciting Du'a 'Arafah is among the highly recommended acts on this day.

relationships with God and his family, or his views on life, love, and pain. Rather, we focus only on a few specific incidents that occurred in his final days.

The Two Models of Narrating Ashura

There are two ways of looking at what happened on the Day of Ashura. In the first and more common, the main focus is on the tragedies. In this model, mourning is dominant. People look at the things that happened to Imam Husayn (a), his family, and his companions. In this narrative, the main actors are not Imam Husayn (a) and his family. The main actors are 'Umar ibn Sa'd and Shimr. Imam Husayn (a) and his family are only passive victims who are going through unexplainable difficulties, suffering, and cruelty. It is not a story of victory; rather, it is a story of loss and tragedy.

However, there is another way of looking at Ashura, a model that considers Imam Husayn (a), his family, and companions as the main actors of the narrative. We are no longer looking at a defeat, but rather a victory. Whilst the sadness and tragedy are undoubtedly still there, they are no longer the dominant themes. It is in fact a tragedy, but the tragedy should not be the brightest thing that is shining from that event. Because if that is the case, then Ashura was a defeat for Imam Husayn (a), whereas we believe that it was not. History testifies that Imam Husayn (a) and Lady Zaynab (s) were the victors of Karbala.

It is possible to look at Ashura and see beyond the loss and tragedy. To do this, we must no longer focus on the actions of the opposing army. "They did this to the Imam" or "They did that". Of course, all of this has its place and has been documented throughout history. But all of these actions were by the army who fought Imam Husayn (a).

Instead, we can focus on the camp of Imam Husayn (a) and the levels of greatness and beauty they manifested in the midst of intolerable tragedies. We see so much beauty. For example, we see that in the heat of the battle, when Imam Husayn (a) had already lost some of his friends and companions, when his daughter called him, Imam Husayn (a) did not say "Not, now! Can't you see we are in the middle of a battle?" No. He dismounted his horse and gently said: "What is it, sweetheart? What is it, the light of my eye?" A whole new dimension opens up once you start focusing on how Imam Husayn (a) acted rather than only focusing on what happened to him.

This leads to so many questions. Where does this calmness come from? How did Imam Husayn (a) have the capacity to remain so loving and calm despite all of this tragedy? How is it that on the Day of Ashura when Ḥabīb Ibn Maẓāhir was talking to one of the other companions, he was making jokes? How can a person be so in control of his self that he is able to keep his sense of humour under such difficult circumstances? Why is it that as the Day of Ashura went on, as the tragedies were piling up, the faces of the companions

in the camp of Imam Husayn (a) brightened? Why is it that Lady Zaynab said:

مَا رَأَيْتُ إِلَّا جَمِيلاً

I saw nothing but beauty.[1]

If we only focus on what the other side did to Imam Husayn (a) and his family, how do we explain the beauty that lady Zaynab refers to? Was the murdering of Ali al-Aṣghar beautiful? Was the martyrdom of Ali Akbar beautiful? Was what they did to Haḍrat Abal-Faḍl beautiful? Of course not. Rather, the beauty is what was happening inside the hearts of these beautiful characters.

The beauty that Lady Zaynab could see despite all that was happening around her had roots within her. The calmness that Imam Husayn (a) showed to be able to be there for his daughter in the heat of the battle, to still be loving, caring and attentive to her, is coming from within Imam Husayn (a).

We want to know more, not about what happened to Imam Husayn (a), but what was happening within Imam Husayn (a). What was his spiritual state like? What was his relationship with God like? What was it that allowed him to remain so calm, so hopeful, and so strong? What was inside this human being that even on the noon of the Day of Ashura, when they had taken everything away from him, even his closest friends, his character was still so attractive that people from the army

---

[1] Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, Ali ibn Mūsā, *Al-Luhūf 'alā Qatlā al-Ṭufūf*, page 94.

of the enemy wanted to risk their lives to join him? Where did this attraction come from? The attraction came from recognising the greatness that a human soul can achieve.

This book is an attempt to look at Imam Husayn (a) differently. Because if we do not focus on what Imam Husayn (a) was like, we could mourn his death for decades, yet never become like him, in the same way that there were people who physically spent time with Imam Husayn (a) or Imam Ali, yet never became like them. In order to become like them, we have to talk about who they really were and what their inner state was like, not just what happened to them.

The Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet (s)

As we study the spiritual side of Imam Husayn (a), we see how he was the continuation of a way of living that Prophet Muhammad (s) had taught. There is a greatness of soul, a connection to God, and a gentleness that you can find in the Prophet (s) and then in his Ahl al-Bayt. Famously, the Prophet (s) raised his hands in prayer for those who threw stones at him and injured him. Similarly, Imam Ali (a) and his army were deprived of water in the Battle of Ṣiffīn, but when the tables turned and his group controlled the river, he instructed that water be given to the enemy. If Imam had deprived the enemy of water, he would have been exactly like them.

This is what we need to learn from Imam Ali (a) so we can become like him. Otherwise, we will be like the people who

even were in his camp but were so different to the Imam. They wanted to deprive the enemy of water. They were with Imam Ali (a) but their role model was someone else.

We see the same with some of the companions of the Prophet (s). On the day of the conquest of Mecca, some of the people who were with the Prophet (s) said, "Oh today is the day of revenge." But the Prophet (s) said, "No, today is the day of forgiveness and compassion." This shows you can be next to the Prophet (s) and not be like him. You can be next to Imam Ali (a) and not be like him. And you can also be next to Imam Husayn (a), mourn him for decades, and not be like him.

As we said, if we want to become like him, we have to know what he was like and what his spiritual state was. And where is the best place to learn about this? Some of the greatest scholars have mentioned that the best place to find the spiritual teachings of the Imams is in their du'as and *munājāts.*[1] One of the most beautiful du'as we have in Islam is Du'a 'Arafah of Imam Husayn (a). In addition to teaching us about life, religion, and God, it is also a beautiful example of a relationship between a beautiful soul and his Creator.

Before we begin the commentary of Du'a 'Arafah, we need to talk a little about the meaning of du'a in general, a concept which is often misunderstood.

---

[1] *Munājāt* is to talk to God intimately and to express one's needs and gratitude. *Munājāt* is very similar to du'a. There are differences mentioned between the two by some scholars which concern the state of the person as they are talking to God.

What is a Du'a?

A du'a is not something you simply read or recite. Rather, a du'a is a real connection that takes place between a soul and its Creator, between a being trapped in time and place, and the source of all creation. Du'a is like a breeze that comes from eternity and saves us from this feeling of being a stranger trapped in a world full of pain. This is the true meaning of du'a. So, when we read Du'a 'Arafah, we are witnessing and reflecting on the connection that took place between Imam Husayn (a) and God.

Hopefully, by reading about Imam's du'a, we will also learn how to perform du'a ourselves; how to create that connection with our creator. We will learn that through du'a, we can transcend the limitations of this physical world and this physical life, and look at the universe, ourselves, and God in a new way.

Du'a Can Change Our Life

There is a common misunderstanding about du'a that means we often do not fully benefit from it. We often consider du'a to be equivalent to asking for the things we want in our material world. For example, 'I hope I get this job.' Rather, it seems the main purpose of du'a is to establish the connection between the soul and its Creator. Once this connection is established, there is no harm in asking for external favours, although we should remember that the best favour, we can ask for is an internal change.

How does that work? When a soul comes into contact with its creator, and becomes aware of its true and infinite nature as it connects to its Creator, it slowly transcends the limitations of this physical world and the limitations of the body. It starts to see the world from a different angle and as a result of this, interacts very differently with the world.

Let us take the case of marriage as an example. We could ask God to find us a spouse because we are looking for love. In doing so, we are asking for change in the external world. But there is another way too. Instead of asking for love in the external world, we could count on du'a to establish a connection with God through which we can find the source of unconditional love and peace within us. It is easier for du'a to change us than the external world. Of course, as we said, this inner change can then create a change in the external world too.

Once we have this peace and unconditional love inside us, we are no longer looking for someone to love us; instead we are now looking for a partner so we can share with them some of the love which is now inside. As a result of this inner change, we have changed from a person who is looking for someone to calm them, to give them love, and to take care of them, to a person who is overflowing with unconditional peace and love and wants to be with someone to share this love with them. Once we become like this, our being naturally attracts people to us. People will feel warmth, peace, and love

emanating from us, and so we will even have a higher chance of finding a spouse.

Here, we see that inner change can lead to external changes as well. However, the main function of the Du'a is to change our inner world.

Are There Special Times for Du'a?

We may mistakenly think that we have to wait for a special occasion or a specific night to talk to God and perform du'a, but du'a can be performed in any situation. For example, if we have made a mistake, or see a shortcoming in our character, or something that needs healing within us. If we feel jealousy or a lack of love for God, or if we are suffering with any issue or problem: all of these are great opportunities to establish du'a!

Du'a 'Arafah

Du'a 'Arafah of Imam Husayn is among the deepest texts on spirituality. I personally feel like I learned more from reflection on this du'a, than I had learned from years of studying and reading about religion and God. Du'a 'Arafah did not just teach me about God, but also enabled me to feel His presence and love. And I am very excited to share this experience with you. The commentary is designed to help you connect with the phrases of the du'a in a more personal and real way.

The du'a has been recorded in different sources such as al-*Balad al-'Amīn* by Ibrāhīm ibn Ali al-Kaf'amī and *Miṣbāh al-Zā'ir* by Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs. The copy recorded by Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs contains a longer version of the du'a. This is the version on which the commentary is based.

Not all phrases of the du'a are included in the commentary as that would require a much longer book, or perhaps a few volumes. But I have tried to include the key phrases of the du'a to the best of my ability. Additionally, in order to give the book a structure that is easier to follow, in some occasions, the order at which the phrases are explained in the book is different to the order in which they appear in the du'a.

Du'a 'Arafah is an inexhaustible ocean of spirituality and knowledge. The deeper a person can dive, the more gems they will find. This book is a humble attempt to bring out some of these gems and share them with you. If there is any shortcoming in the book, it should be attributed to me, and for the many spiritual gems in the book, all the credit goes to Imam Husayn (a).

I hope you enjoy reading the du'a along with the commentary and I invite you to approach it with an open heart.

Javad Shomali

June 2022

Chapter One

The Creator

Having talked about the nature of du'a in general, it is now time to begin our specific discussion on Du'a 'Arafah, which starts as follows:

> الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِي لَيْسَ لِقَضَائِهِ دَافِعٌ وَلَا لِعَطَائِهِ مَانِعٌ وَلَا كَصُنْعِهِ صُنْعُ صَانِعٍ
>
> Praise be to the Lord whose ordinance cannot be repelled by anyone, whose gifts cannot be stopped, whose creation is not like the creation of any other creator.

Of course, these lines are incredibly beautiful. However, they may not seem entirely relatable to us. It may feel a little bit forced for us to say, 'Praise be to the Lord whose ordinance cannot be repelled by anyone'. This is not a natural statement coming from our heart. If we want to benefit from these lines, we have to invest some time in unlocking the deep beauty within them; otherwise, they may seem very distant and obscure to us. We have to remember that this du'a is the report of a real event that took place; Imam Husayn (a) had a religious experience during this du'a. It is an expression of the unique way in which he viewed the world.

When we look around us, we usually see the worldly causes (*asbāb*) that God has created. We see, for example, a chair, a doctor, or a fire that keeps us warm. However, sometimes during a religious experience, or a spiritual moment, we see the hand behind them; the hidden force that has created them all. To illustrate this point, imagine watching someone who is writing calligraphy. You can either conclude that it is the pen that is writing the calligraphy, or you might instead go a level higher and see that it is the hand that is moving the pen and that without it, the pen could not write. Perhaps you could even go a level higher and say that without the will of the artist, even the hand could not move.

So often in this world we see the pen but not the artist behind it. We see people or machines doing things, but we do not see God's power behind them. Imam Husayn (a) is looking behind the scenes of the world when he says: 'Praise be to the Lord whose ordinance cannot be repelled by anyone.' These are not just saying words, rather the Imam is expressing the way that he sees the world.

We need to remember that if for us the lines in the du'a seem unnatural, it is because the way we see the world is different. We should not then force ourselves to repeat these lines; rather we should see them as an invitation to another way of experiencing the world. It *is* possible to look at the world and see the hidden hand behind it. That is what Imam Husayn (a) saw and praised when he said:

فَلا إِلٰهَ غَيْرُهُ وَلا شَيْءَ يَعْدِلُه وَلَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ ... وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

There is no Lord but Him, there is nothing like Him, nothing is even like the likeness of Him... He has power over everything.

Often, when people want to praise God for His Creation, they do this by way of comparison. However, Imam Husayn (a) does not claim that God's Creation is better than that of other inventors. No! At the level at which he is viewing the world, he sees that there is simply no-one other than God who has the power to do anything: 'There is nothing like Him'. At that level, there is literally nothing else that can be compared to God. God is all there is. Later on in the du'a, Imam says to God, 'Everything is showing You to me. There is nothing other than You'.

God Gave Insān the Power of Creation

If, as we said earlier, everything is done by God, then some may wonder what the purpose of our creation is. What role do we play in this world? Imam Husayn (a) answers this beautifully in the du'a when he describes God as:

جازى كُلِّ صانِعٍ

The one who repays every creator.

Imam Husayn (a) considers that the only true creating force (*ṣun'*) in this world is God. However, in this phrase we see that creation (*ṣun'*) has been attributed to *insān* too. In other

words, God has decided that He wants to give some of this power of creation to His beloved creation: *insān.*

We use this power of creation in virtually everything we do. For example, when we speak, every word we put out there is a creation. In fact, speaking is one of the most manifest forms of creation. In the Qur'an we read that God uses speech to create, "*He just says to it, 'Be' and it is.*"[1]

We should know then, that with every decision we make, and every word we utter, we are practicing our God-given power of creation. Every action of ours has consequences. We have to use this power carefully. With every word, we can create either a beautiful world, or some form of hell. We have the power to make the world a better place, or create insecurities in someone, or break their heart. Nations have gone to war because someone hurt the insecurities of a ruler with their words. Words are powerful! How many people, who had great dreams of changing the world, gave up because someone told them 'You cannot do it', when they were a child? That person used their God-given power of creation to say something that discouraged another human being from following their dreams, and in doing so, changed the world for the worse.

In this part of the du'a, Imam is saying that God is the creator, but that He also gave some of the power of creation to us. We too can create, but our power is limited. We will often

---

[1] Qur'an 2:117

face challenges greater than the power we have at that time. Therefore, the du'a continues:

رَايِشُ كُلِّ قَانِعٍ

The Enricher of every content one.

If we are content with the power we have, and use it well, God will enrich us and give us further power. If despite this, we still face difficulties and struggle to overcome our challenges, He is there to help us:

رَاحِمُ كُلِّ ضَارِعٍ

The One who is Merciful towards every person who appeals to Him,

God will be there for us when we are struggling or when we are having difficulty. If we go to Him, he will hear us and help us:

وَمُنْزِلُ ٱلْمَنَافِعِ وَهُوَ لِلدَّعَوَاتِ سَامِعٌ وَلِلْكُرُبَاتِ دَافِعٌ

The One who sends favours, is the Hearer of prayers, and the One who wards difficulties off.

With these phrases, Imam Husayn (a) is introducing God to us: this loving, caring God, who is the source of all power, has given us the power to create and enforce our will in this world. When our power is not enough to overcome our challenges, God will be there for us if we go to him. He will listen to us, hear our pain and help us.

Even more beautifully, Imam reminds us that nothing will be hidden from Him:

لا تَخْفَى عَلَيْهِ ٱلطَّلائِعُ

> All growing things cannot be hidden from Him.

He sees everything that we do. He is there with us throughout all the challenges and all the worries. He knows them all, and even better:

وَلا تَضِيعُ عِنْدَهُ ٱلْوَدائِعُ

> And all things deposited with Him shall never be wasted.

He keeps account of the very smallest things we do - not to punish, but to appreciate! You might have been there for your parents when no-one else noticed your efforts, or perhaps for your children, who because of their own struggles, could not appreciate your efforts; don't worry! None of it was wasted: God appreciates all of it.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we learnt that God is the source of everything in this world, and the hidden hand behind this universe that makes everything possible. All power belongs to Him. We also discussed how God has granted a share of His power of creation to humanity, and how this has made you and I very important. We can also create. We can change the world, either for the better or for worse.

Although we have been given the power to act, our power is limited, and sometimes we face challenges that we cannot overcome. Imam Husayn (a) reminds us that God is always there for us. He is always there to listen to us and help, often aiding us and warding off our problems without us even knowing.

Chapter Two

God's Love for Insān

In the previous chapter, we read about God's special attention to *insān*. Not only has God given us the power to create, but He is also always there for us whenever we face a challenge that we cannot overcome. Once someone feels all the special love and attention that God has bestowed upon humanity, naturally they will echo the Imam when he says:

اللّهُمَّ إِنّي أَرْغَبُ إِلَيْكَ

O God, I willingly yearn for You.

Of course, we may not yet feel God's love. However, Imam Husayn (a) shows us that there is a way of living where you continuously feel that God is taking care of you, and that you are not alone. Once you feel that, it would be natural to say things like, 'Wow, God, you did all of this for me? You shared your own power with me? You let me experience what it means to make a difference? Whenever I faced difficulties, You were there, patiently listening to me?'

All of this love you feel *from* God leads to a desire to feel closer *to* God:

اللّٰهُمَّ إِنِّي أَرْغَبُ إِلَيْكَ

O God, I willingly yearn for You.

The Loving Rabb

Imam immediately continues:

وَأَشْهَدُ بِالرُّبُوبِيَّةِ لَكَ مُقِرّاً بِأَنَّكَ رَبِّي

> I bear witness to your Lordship, acknowledging that You are my Lord.

Imam expresses his love for God. However, he also realises that God has taken care of him, and that He is his *Rabb.* From this passage onwards, we learn about God's love for us, but throughout the du'a, Imam Husayn (a) also teaches us what the word *Rabb* actually means. We will read about how God takes care of us throughout every chapter of our lives: it is an incredibly beautiful story!

وَأَنَّ إِلَيْكَ مَرَدِّي

And to You will be my return.

Imam Husayn (a) narrates the account of our life in a compelling way. He starts by telling us the end of the story. The end of our story is that we are going to return to God. That is the end of every single human being; our destination is going to be with God. We are going to return to our loving creator. But to 'return' means that we were once with God, and so the beginning of the story is also clear: at some point, our story began with God. Now Imam takes us to the very

beginning; before we were born, and begins to tell us how much God took care of us, even then.

ابْتَدَأْتَنِي بِنِعْمَتِكَ قَبْلَ أَنْ أَكُونَ شَيْئاً مَذْكُوراً

> You had begun bestowing on me Your blessings before I was even mentioned.

I did not have a name yet; no one was mentioning me, but You began loving me and giving me blessings. When was this? Was it before we were born, perhaps at the time of our fathers or grandfathers? No; as we will see, this love started way earlier. It is very beautiful.

أَسْكَنْتَنِي الأَصْلابَ آمِناً لِرَيْبِ الْمَنُونِ وَاخْتِلافِ الدُّهُورِ وَالسِّنِينَ فَلَمْ أَزَلْ ظاعِناً مِنْ صُلْبٍ إِلىٰ رَحِمٍ فِي تَقادُمٍ مِنَ الأَيّامِ الْماضِيَةِ وَالْقُرُونِ الْخالِيَةِ

> You gave me a place in the loins of my forefathers, secure from the uncertainty of fate and the whims of the ages and the years. I was moving from a loin to a womb, throughout the passage of the past days and the ancient ages.

Throughout history, from the very earliest of times, from the very first human beings, You carried me within my ancestors; in their wombs and their loins, from one generation to another. Whilst You carried me for all this time, there were many opportunities for me to be born, but You had a special plan for me:

لَمْ تُخْرِجْنِي لِرَأْفَتِكَ بِي وَلُطْفِكَ لِي وإِحْسانِكَ إِلَيَّ

> You did not take me out (to this world) on account of Your care, kindness, and compassion towards me.

You kept me from the uncertainties of time and from all the ups and downs over various periods. There were so many cruel rulers, violent eras, and ages of ignorance, when humanity was in the Dark Ages, when You did not bring me into the world, because of your love for me. This does not mean that there will be no difficulties in our life. It also does not mean that God did not love the people who came before us. It means that every person is born at a time that is right for them. The time we are born in is based on the talents and potentials we have and is chosen for us out of God's love so we can shine and reach our full potential.

This is an extremely important point, as it shows that the timing of our birth is not an accident. For every single one of us, God has a plan. From the very beginning, He knew Javad, Fatimah, Zahraa, Ali, Muhammad, Masoumeh; whatever your beautiful name is, there was a specific time for you. God waited, keeping you from all these difficulties until the time was right, and only then did he bring you forth.

Imam continues, beautifully:

> فِيهِ أَنْشَأْتَنِي وَمِنْ قَبْلِ ذٰلِكَ رَؤُفْتَ بِي بِجَمِيلِ صُنْعِكَ وَسَوابِغِ نِعَمِكَ

> You have brought me up in it, but even before that, You were kind to me through Your gracious fashioning and abundant blessings.

Finally, when the time was right for me to shine, You brought me to this world. Earlier, we said that God has given every single human being the power to create, and God knows when the perfect time would be for each person to use this power. In the grand scheme of things, every single one of us has a role to play, and Imam says that God kept us for all this time, through generations, in our ancestors' loins and wombs, until the time was right for us to be born into this world. We can see how God's kindness and attention to us started even before we were born. In fact, even our birth and its timing were from His love.

Isn't that so beautiful? A lot of people might think that God only likes those who do good deeds, or those who have good actions to their name. But Imam Husayn (a) says that before we even came to this earth, God loved us. Before coming to this earth, we did not have any good deeds. What actions had we done? He says that thousands of years before we were born, before we even had a name to be mentioned, God loved us and had a plan for us.

So, God's love for humanity is unconditional. It does not rely on our good actions; rather it was there prior to us even performing actions of any description. A good question which this may bring to your mind is that if this is the case, then what is the point of our good actions? The answer,

contrary to what we may have been told, is that our good actions help us to *feel* God's love, not to *gain* it. God's love is unconditional, and it is for all humanity:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بِٱلنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

> Surely God is Ever Compassionate and Most Merciful to humanity. (Qur'an 2:143)

At the time of Prophet Mūsā, the worst of people was the Pharaoh. Did God stop loving him? No. God tells Prophet Mūsā to go to the Pharoah and speak to him softly. Why?

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَيِّنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ

> And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or become mindful of [God]. (Qur'an 20:44)

So, we see that God showed so much love, even to the Pharoah. Despite knowing his crimes, God still did not give up on him. Of course, God did not love his bad actions, but He still loved him enough that if there was a chance for him to repent and become a better person, He wanted to give him that opportunity. This opportunity was not just for him to be forgiven, but for much more. God had high hopes that even the Pharaoh would reach *khashyah*, a level which the Qur'an says is reserved only for those who hold true knowledge:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

> Of all of God's servants, only the knowledgeable of His might are truly in awe of Him. (Qur'an 35:28)

God did not only say that He had hopes for the Pharaoh to be forgiven, but rather that He had hopes for the Pharaoh to become a great *'ālim* or *'ārif.* Thus, we should never think that God's love for you and I is at all conditional.

Why does God love us this much? Why did God love the Pharaoh? You will see that it is because He has invested in us. He gave us this power of creation. We mean a lot to Him. God considers *insān* so special that He breathed into us from his own spirit:

> فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَ نَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ
>
> And when I form him perfect[ly] and blow in[to] him of My spirit, you fall down before him, prostrating. (Qur'an 15:29)

He has done so much, and taken such care of us. Imam Husayn (a) explains:

> وَحَفِظْتَنِي فِي الْمَهْدِ طِفْلاً صَبِيّاً وَرَزَقْتَنِي مِنَ الْغِذَاءِ لَبَناً مَرِيّاً وَعَطَفْتَ عَلَيَّ قُلُوبَ الْحَوَاضِنِ وَكَفَّلْتَنِي الأُمَّهاتِ الرَّواحِمَ حَتَّى إِذَا اسْتَهْلَلْتُ نَاطِقاً بِالْكَلاَمِ
>
> You have safeguarded me in the cradle as a small child. You have provided me with wholesome milk as food. You have made the hearts of the caretakers tender. You put me under the care of loving caretakers [to take care of me when I could not even talk and articulate my needs] until I started to pronounce words.

Before I was born, You showed love to me. I came here and You took care of me. You made me cute so that that people were drawn to me and were kind to me. You put love into the heart of my mother so that she would be caring towards me. You made those who took care of me tender towards me. Over the years, throughout the ups and downs, you kept me stable. You took care of me until I started speaking. All of this You did for me. You can see that Imam Husayn (a) is showing the love that God showered upon us at every stage of our lives.

When we were children, if someone asked us how we sustained ourselves, where our energy was coming from and how we were healthy, we might have replied that it was simple: we ate good food and slept well. Then, when you become a parent yourself, you realize how much energy is expended just to provide that food. The child says so casually that they sleep well, but their parents strive day and night and exhaust their efforts in order to provide that house and bed. I remember, the first few months that I paid rent, it felt like my back was breaking! But a child just nonchalantly assumes that the house is there, and their parents bring food for them to eat. They do not know the efforts and energy involved in providing the house and bringing food to it.

Imam Husayn (a) is looking at it from an even higher level. He acknowledges that his parents showed him love, but knows that there is a greater force at play. He appreciates that it was in fact God who put that love in his mother's heart, so

that his mother would take care of him. It was God who put tenderness into the hearts of those around him so that they would nurse him. Ultimately, it was God who was showing love to him, and to every single human being, long before any of us could even perform any actions.

Many of us think it is our good actions that bring God's love; this is what the angels assumed too. When God wanted to create *Insān*, the angels told Him that if His love was for those who glorify Him, then they were there for that very purpose:

وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ

> ... we highly exalt You with praise and proclaim Your holiness. (Qur'an 2:30)

Angels were there to glorify and to perform good actions. But despite His deep love for His angels, God had a far more important role in mind for *insān*. *Insān* has a very unique position amongst the entirety of God's creation:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي ءَادَمَ

> We have certainly honoured the children of Adam. (Qur'an 17:70)

Meaning of Rabb

Often, in du'a or elsewhere, we say, '*Yā rabbī*.' It's important to know what *Rabb* actually means. From here onward, I hope that whenever we say '*Yā rabbī*,' what comes to mind is the different ways in which God takes care of us. All the different forms of love that Imam Husayn (a) mentioned fall

under God's attribute of being a *Rabb.* Imam says that God is a *Rabb* because He kept him safe. He is a *Rabb* because He made his mother loving towards him. He is a *Rabb* because He gave him food and sustenance. This is what *Rabb* means. There is so much love in this role. A *Rabb* is someone who took care of you and loved you before you were even born. He makes sure the food you need reaches you. He listens to you:

وَهُوَ لِلدَّعواتِ سامِعٌ، ولِلْكُرُباتِ دافِعٌ

> He is also the Hearer of prayers, the Warder off of anguishes.

All of this comes together under the umbrella of being a *Rabb*, and as we mentioned earlier, this is not just for those who are 'good'. This is for everyone; God did this for every single human being. In Surah al-Nās we say:

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ

> Say, 'I seek refuge with the Lord of all people.'
> (Qur'an 114:1)

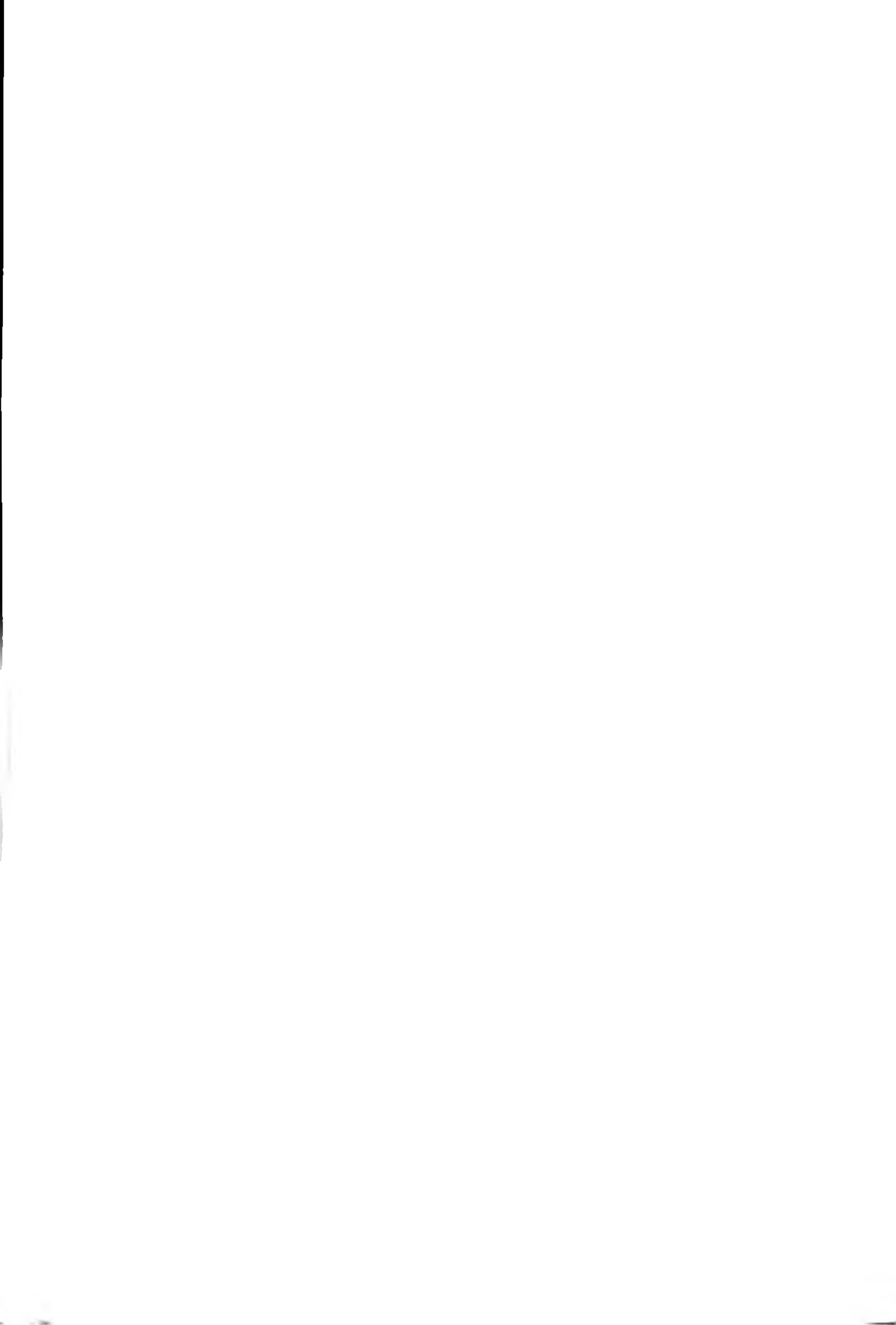
The Rabb of *all* people. God took care of every single person. Long before they were born, He took care of them. When the time was right for them to be born, He brought them to this world. God showed love and put love into their mother's hearts. God went through all of these stages with them, and continues to do so for everyone: God's love is for *everyone.*

In the next chapter, we will read the rest of the story. In addition to everything that God did for us so that our body grows, Imam also mentions another type of blessing that God has bestowed upon us; another way in which He takes care of us and pays attention to us as our *Rabb.*

Chapter Summary

In this part of the du'a, we learned that God's love for us started long before we were born. Even the time of our birth was chosen, out of God's love, to be the time in which we would shine the most. Every person, using their God-given power of creation, has a role to play in the world. The period, location and circumstances of our birth are not accidental or random; rather, they are chosen by God, through His love, so that we can have the most impact.

Thus, Imam says that God kept us, from generation to generation, whilst our ancestors came and left, until the right time for us, and only then did He bring us to this world. Once we were born, God did not leave us on our own. He put our love into the hearts of our caretakers, so that they would take care of us when we could not articulate our needs. He continued to take care of us in different ways, until we reached an age at which we could talk and understand. We will continue with the rest of the story in the next chapter, *insha'allah.*



Chapter Three

The Five Ways God Communicates with Us

In the previous chapter, we read about how God has taken care of us from before our birth until the age at which we began to talk. In this part of the du'a, we read about the continuation of the story: God's love for us after we began talking.

> حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ٱسْتَهلَلْتُ نَاطِقاً بِٱلْكَلاَمِ أَتْمَمْتَ عَلَيَّ سَوابِغَ الإِنعامِ، وَرَبَّيْتَنِي زائِداً فِي كُلِّ عامٍ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ٱكْتَمَلَتْ فِطْرَتِي وَٱعْتَدَلَتْ مِرَّتِي
>
> Then when I began to utter speech, you completed for me your abundant blessings. You nurtured me more and more each year until when my *fiṭrah* (human nature) was perfected and my strength balanced.

Imam acknowledges that God was the One who blessed him and took care of him, year after year, until his *fiṭrah*, that part of him which made him an *insān*, gradually became ready, and until his physical and mental strength was adequate, and then God began to shower him with another type of blessing.

Imam Husayn (a) teaches us that when we reach an age at which we can think and act, then God begins to give us even more attention. This extra attention is in the form of God's direct communication with us. In the first chapter, we discussed Imam Husayn's statement that God has blessed us with the power to create. Well, when we reach a certain age, we begin to use this power. And so, God talks to us in a variety of ways, to ensure that the decisions we make lead to the best results, both for us and for humanity: decisions that leads to our happiness, and not our pain.

In the following phrases of the du'a, we read about the different ways that God communicates with human beings.

I. Direct Revelation of Knowledge to Our Hearts

أَوْجَبْتَ عَلَيَّ حُجَّتَكَ بِأَنْ أَلْهَمْتَنِي مَعْرِفَتَكَ

> You completed your *ḥujjah* on me by revealing knowledge of You directly to me.

To illustrate the meaning of *ḥujjah*, consider the following example. Imagine you hire someone to complete some work, and the two of you sign a contract that specifies an exact completion date. If the contractor does not finish the work by that date, then they cannot claim ignorance of their responsibility. You have proof, in the form of the contract you had drawn up before they started. This is your *ḥujjah* over them.

On the Day of Judgment, if God were to ask us why we had not taken care of ourselves, or lived in the way that He expected, can we claim ignorance, and declare that we did not know the best way to live? We cannot, because God has *ḥujjah* over us; he has shown us the way. But what form does God's *ḥujjah* over us take, primarily? We might expect it to be in the form of religion, for God to ask us: 'Did I not send Islam to you?'. However, Imam says religion is *not* God's first *ḥujjah*:

أَوْجَبْتَ عَلَيَّ حُجَّتَكَ بِأَنْ أَلْهَمْتَنِي مَعْرِفَتَكَ

> You completed your *ḥujjah* on me by revealing knowledge of you directly to me.

The way that God completed his *ḥujjah* over us is through direct communication with us. It as if God has instilled within us a direct line through which He speaks to us and helps us determine right from wrong. *This* is the *ḥujjah* He is going to ask about on the Day of Judgment. More important than having been given a religion, is that God speaks to every one of us directly. We have a *fitrah*, and so we feel when something is wrong or right.

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا

> By the soul and how He formed it, and then revealed to it [the knowledge of] right and wrong. (Qur'an 91:7-8)

It is actually only by using this system within us that we can choose our religion. The way that we know whether a certain

religion is correct or not is because of this inner voice. Sometimes, this voice inside you will tell you that a part of your understanding of religion is wrong. Not that your religion itself is wrong, but rather that the interpretation of it that has reached you over the years has been distorted.

For example, sometimes, we may come across a ruling in our religion which seems very cruel to us. On the Day of Judgement, we cannot tell God that we acted according to a certain ruling simply because we were told to. If we acted according to it, despite feeling that it was cruel, we will be held responsible, because that feeling was God's direct communication to our heart and His voice within us. If we feel within us that something that we have been told is part of religion feels wrong, it is our responsibility to look into it and research about it.

II. Through Life Events

وَرَوَّعْتَنِي بِعَجائِبِ حِكْمَتِكَ

> And [You] alarmed me [with] the wonders of Your wisdom.

Imam Husayn (a) says that sometimes, out of His Love, God talks to us through life events. Let me illustrate this with a deeply moving story a friend shared with me about his life some years ago. He deeply loved a girl, and she in turn loved him back, but their parents did not allow them to get married.

They did whatever they could to convince their parents, with no success. Sometimes, they would even do things they knew were wrong, just to be closer to one another. After many years, the girl left him, and said that even if their parents now agreed to the union, she was no longer interested in marrying him.

This came as a shock to him, and forced him into months of deep reflection: What had gone wrong? Why had she left him? He told me that eventually, he realised that those very decisions and actions that he had made to bring them closer together, despite knowing that the actions were not acceptable by God, were actually the ones that ultimately pushed her further away.

An example he gave me was of a wrong action he had made was that they had planned to spend more time together by joining the same university and living in the same dorms, without the knowledge of their parents. He had tried so hard to convince the girl to join the same university as him, but it was there that she found someone else she preferred, who she eventually ended up leaving him for.

The relevance of this story to our discussion is that through this awful turn of events, my friend had learned a beautiful lesson. He realised that he was wrong to assume that following what God wanted would get him farther from what he desired. In fact, had he acted according to what God had wanted, he may even have ended up with the girl he loved.

Although this was understandably a difficult time for him, realising that God actually loved him and wanted the best for him really calmed his heart. He had mistakenly ignored God's primary form of communication, that which is direct to the heart, and suffered as a result. He knew that at least some of what he was doing with the girl was wrong, yet he had done it anyway, and thus he suffered. Regardless, God did not stop loving him but instead, through this turn of events, taught him a heart-warming lesson: if God is planning and you are planning, you should trust God's plan more.

Perhaps listening to hundreds of lectures or reading tens of books would not have been able to make him fully understand this point, but a life event showed him that he could trust God unreservedly, and this is why God sometimes speaks to us through life events.

III. Through Awakening Moments in Our Lives

وَأَيقَظتَنِي لِما ذَرَأتَ فِي سَمائِكَ وَأَرضِكَ مِن بَدائِعِ خَلقِكَ

> And You awakened me to the novel and wonderous phenomena that You have created in Your heavens and lands.

Sometimes, as part of His blessings, God talks to us through awakening moments in our life. An example of an awakening moment in which God talks to us and teaches us things that can help us live a better life, is becoming a parent. Often, after becoming a parent, one of the first things people realise is just how much effort their own parents put in for them when they

were children. They feel the need to go back and kiss the hands of their own parents, to be there for them and to show love to them. A lifetime of listening to lectures on gratitude for parents would not have taught them the same lesson that having children themselves did.

Imam Husayn (a) says that when something occurs in your life (e.g. becoming a parent) and as a result, a lesson (in this case, gratitude to your parents) enters the deepest corners of your heart, this is God's way of talking to you. Therefore, *life events, whether they be shocking, scary or happy, are all ways of awakening us, and of God talking to us in His mercy and love.*

IV. Directing Our Attention

وَنَبَّهتَنِي لِشُكْرِكَ وَذِكْرِكَ

> You attracted [my attention] to thank and remember You.

Another way God speaks to us is through some event that suddenly makes you want to talk to Him, or thank Him. This, of course, is all for our own benefit. In chapter five, we will discuss how *Shukr* is for our own benefit.

Sometimes, God may cause something to occur in your life so that you remember Him. For example, he may grant you a success so that you become happy and talk to Him. And again, this is all out of His love because He knows how much we will benefit from having a relationship with God.

V. Teachings of the Prophets

One of the beautiful things about God's love is that even if we do not appreciate it, He does not give up on us. Despite the fact that He has spoken to all of us in the ways we mentioned above, many of us still miss His communications and remain lost in our lives. Out of His love, God also sent messengers, through whom He communicated with us to help us find our way.

وَفَهَّمْتَنِي مَا جاءَتْ بِهِ رُسُلُكَ

> You made me understand that with which Your Apostles came.

In the Qur'an, we read about the Prophet (s):

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

> It was only as a mercy that We sent you [Prophet] to all people. (Qur'an 21:107)

The main role of the messengers and prophets is to help us find God and His communication in our lives. Imam Ali (a) describes the task of prophets and messengers of God as follows:

فَبَعثَ فِيهِمْ رُسُلَهُ وَوَاتَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْبِيَاءَهُ ... وَيُذَكِّرُوهُمْ مَنْسِيَّ نِعْمَتِهِ ... وَيُثِيرُوا لَهُمْ دَفَائِنَ الْعُقُولِ.

> Then God sent His Messengers and a series of His prophets towards them to remind them of

> His bounties ... and to help them access the forgotten levels of their understanding.[1]

Therefore, the messengers came to awaken us and to help us remember that God is there and that He has given us so many blessings. We all know this, but sometimes we become so distracted that we forget. Prophets come to help us unveil the knowledge that we have deep within us. Thus, the fifth way God communicates with us is through messengers.

We Need to Understand the Religion

There is a very important line in this phrase of the du'a:

وَفَهَّمْتَنِي مَا جَاءَتْ بِهِ رُسُلُكَ

> You made me understand that which Your messengers brought.

According to this line, we should be able to understand what the prophets and messengers have brought to us. In other words, religion can only be beneficial if we understand it. Unfortunately, this important point is often neglected. When someone has a question about religion, they are sometimes told that it does not matter and that they should just follow. Some people have even been told that religion is not meant to be understood. But here we see that Imam Husayn (a) sees things differently. God has given us the capacity to understand religion, and if we are not able to, then there is a

[1] Sharīf al-Radī, Muhammad, *Nahj al-Balāghah (li Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ)*, p. 43.

problem in the way it has been taught to us. We *need* to understand what we are doing.

When it comes to du'as, many of us have been told to just read them, even if we do not understand the meaning. That is not going to be beneficial. We need to know what we are reading. After having read the commentary on this du'a in the preceding pages, do you not feel that you are learning more about God and life? Well, this is only possible with reflection.

Sometimes, even reading the translation of the du'a is not enough. The discussion in this chapter about the five ways in which God communicates with us may be missed if you only read the English translation. Look how this passage that we discussed in this chapter is translated elsewhere online:

> You put me under the obligation of your claim which is that you inspired me with recognition of you and alarmed me by the wonders of your wisdom.

Honestly, what can we understand from this line? Can we derive from it what we have been discussing in this chapter about God communicating with us directly into our hearts? For years, many of us read the Arabic text and we do not understand, and still more of us read the English translation and we too do not understand.

This is not our fault and there is no judgement here! This discussion is so that together we attempt to benefit more

from our religion. The fact that you are reading this book is the first step; it means you care about increasing your understanding and connecting to God in a real way.

Imam Husayn (a) wants us to understand our religion. There is so much beauty and joy that can be gleaned from religion and du'as, if we realise we are meant to understand what we are doing and that all of this was given to us out of God's love. Otherwise, we will think that we are doing all of this as a favour to God, and it will feel like a chore or duty.

Religion is God's Blessing

Another beautiful point in this passage is that after Imam Husayn (a) describes the different ways God communicates with us, he acknowledges that all of these are out of God's love for us. God initiated a dialogue with us and sent messengers to us not to make life difficult for us, but rather because He loves us:

وَمَنَنْتَ عَلَيَّ فِي جَمِيعِ ذٰلِكَ بِعَوْنِكَ وَلُطْفِكَ

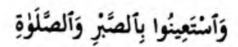
> You bestowed upon me all that out of Your kindness and as a favour to help me.

Religion was sent to us by the same God who took care of us when we were born, and who put love for us into the hearts of our caregivers so that they would protect us. Religion, then, should feel like a gift given through love. If it does not feel this way to us right now, it means we have understood it incorrectly.

Allow me to give you an example that shows how much we have misunderstood religion. I was listening to a lecturer who said that if people who do not perform *ṣalāh* go to heaven, then it would be unfair to those who do perform their *ṣalāh*. At first glance, this may seem like a reasonable statement. But it is betraying so much about the person's understanding of religion. With the help of another example, it will become clear how flawed this thinking is.

Think of all the times you went to your parent or a friend to get energy and feel their love. Would it make sense for you to say that it is unfair to you if those who did not receive this kind of love go to heaven? No; that would be absurd. The same applies to prayer. If I pray correctly, which means that I go to God to receive love and energy, why would I consider it unfair if those who did not receive that love also go to heaven? This only shows that for many of us, prayer is not a source of energy and love, but rather something we consider a chore or a burden. Therefore, if we see someone who has not prayed, we feel like they have carried less of a burden than us, and so consider it unfair if they go to heaven.

Religion is only useful when you realize it is for yourself. It is for your benefit, and if prayer or any other part of religion feels like something you are doing for God's benefit, then it is wrong. Imam Husayn (a) is explaining that religion is going to be beneficial only when you truly know that it is for you.



> And seek help through patience and prayer.
> (Qur'an 2:45)

God tells us that we should use prayer as a means to recharge and find inner strength and support. Unfortunately, many of us act as if God requires our prayer and we are praying for Him. But our prayer is not for God. It is for us, to get love and energy, but it will only give us this energy once we change our attitude towards it.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we learned from Imam Husayn (a) that one form of God's love for us is that he does not leave us alone, but rather communicates with us throughout our life. We learned that there are five ways in which God communicates with us:

1) Directly to our hearts

2) Through life events

3) Through awakening moments

4) By directing our attention

5) By sending messengers to us.

Amongst these five, Imam Husayn (a) said the first is the most important. In fact, it is through the first that we can understand and appreciate the rest. Even when we choose our religion, we use our God-given understanding to discern if it

is right or wrong. We also learned that it is incredibly important that we understand our religion and know why we do the things we do; otherwise, the acts which are meant to give us energy can instead turn into a chore or burden.

Chapter Four

Looking at Insān through God's Eyes

In this chapter, we will focus on one of the key phrases of the du'a, one packed with so much information. If there is one thing we take away from Du'a 'Arafah, let it be this one. It is at the core of Imam Husayn's understanding of the relationship between God and *insān*. In the following chapters, we will also look at how Imam Husayn (a) demonstrated this truth throughout his life. But for now, let us read the phrase:

> لَمْ يَمْنَعْكَ جَهْلِي وَجُرْأَتِي عَلَيْكَ أَنْ دَلَلْتَنِي إِلَىٰ مَا يُقَرِّبُنِي إِلَيْكَ،
> وَوَفَّقْتَنِي لِما يُزْلِفُنِي لَدَيْكَ
>
> My ignorance of You and my audacity have not stopped You from showing me that which takes me near to You, and from leading me to that which grants me proximity to You.

In this section of the du'a, Imam Husayn (a) teaches us that God's love for us did not stop when we made mistakes. God did not stop giving us blessings even when we challenged Him and ignored Him. Rather, He treated us with patience, much like loving parents who do not see their teenagers' rebellion as a sign that they are intrinsically 'bad'.

Sometimes, in our ignorance, we act contrary to God's commands. Sometimes, it may be worse than ignorance. We might know something is wrong, but still do it. Sometimes, we may be even more audacious and actually challenge God and tell Him that He is wrong. Imam Husayn (a) informs us that none of these acts, as bad as they are, makes God stop caring for us. God never stops wanting us to get close to Him. Despite all we do, He still helps us and wants us to be with Him. He continues to love us, and regardless of our actions, if we call Him, He is always ready to answer:

فَإِنْ دَعَوْتُكَ أَجَبْتَنِي

And when I called you, you answered me.

There are times when we feel guilty talking to God. Maybe we have done something wrong, and now we feel unworthy. However, Imam Husayn (a) is telling us that nothing should stop us from talking to God, because nothing, not even our worst mistakes, will stop God from answering us and loving us. In fact, it is when we have made a mistake that we most need God's love to heal us. So let this phrase of the du'a be a reminder to us:

لَمْ يَمْنَعْكَ جَهْلِي وَجُرْأَتِي عَلَيْكَ أَنْ دَلَلْتَنِي إِلَىٰ مَا يُقَرِّبُنِي إِلَيْكَ

My ignorance of You and my audacity have not stopped You from showing me that which takes me near to You.

Sometimes, when life gets tough, we may challenge God, asking why He has been so cruel as to allow this difficulty to

befall us. This is despite the fact that God never harms anyone, and everything that He does for us is out of love. Still, even if we do not appreciate His love, or are rude towards Him, He does not become cold or distant. Sometimes, in a relationship, we may forgive someone but then still act a little cold or distant when we next talk to them. But, Imam says God is always welcoming when we approach Him:

> فَإِنْ دَعَوْتُكَ أَجَبْتَنِي وَ إِنْ سَأَلْتُكَ أَعْطَيْتَنِي وَ إِنْ أَطَعْتُكَ شَكَرْتَنِي
>
> And when I called You, You answered me. And if I asked You, You gave me. And if I followed You, You showed gratitude.

Despite all of my sins and disobedience, He still shows love towards me and listens to me. I asked and He gave me. I came towards Him and He thanked me, even though all of my actions were ultimately for my own good. He does not need me, but still, He was grateful to me. God, with all His greatness, thanks us. How beautiful is that?

Imagine you have guests over. You have had food and now it is time to take the dishes back to the kitchen. Now, imagine there is a three-year-old who really wants to help. He takes one of the plates and is trying to carry it. You are worried he may drop and break it and hurt himself. It would be much easier if he did not help; you could do the job yourself much quicker. But you still appreciate the child. Once he gets there, you thank him: 'Thank you so much. Well done! Bless you.' This is how God treats us and appreciates us. God, with all of His greatness, thanks us when we try to do something, even

though all our actions only really benefit us, and nothing we can ever do benefits Him in any way.

Importance of Love

Now, let us read between the lines of the du'a and go a little deeper. I want to talk to you about the importance of love and being able to see humanity through God's lens. Abū Sa'īd Abu al-Khayr, one of Islam's great mystics, once remarked that if we learn to look at people through God's eyes, there will never be any conflict. As long as we are looking from our own angle, there will always be arguments.

In the famous Hadith of *Mi'rāj*, when describing the group of people for whom it is guaranteed to feel Divine Love, God counts as one of their qualities that they look at people with the same love and care that God has for them:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ نَظَرُوا إِلَى الْمَخْلُوقِينَ بِنَظَرِي إِلَيْهِم

> Those are the ones who look at My creation the way I look at them.

Let me tell you something that I experienced recently. On Twitter, I saw a post from someone whose political views were the antithesis of mine. I remember thinking that whilst I didn't dislike this person, there was no way I could ever be friends with them. I was just so appalled by their political views that I felt there was no chance there could ever be a personal friendship between us. A few weeks later, I happened to meet a childhood friend whom I had not seen in

a long time. We had been very close as children and after all these years we still felt the same way. We began talking and were having a great time. Halfway through our conversation, I realised that he had the same political views that I had seen earlier on Twitter. It still really upset me, but because I knew and loved him, I felt that we could still be friends, despite our differences. I knew he was not a bad person, but rather that he just saw things differently.

Afterwards, when I came home, it suddenly hit me. Two people with the same political views: one of whom I felt I could never be friends with, but the other whom I spoke to and had a great time with. I realised the only difference was that I was looking at one of them as a stranger and therefore I was reducing him only to his political ideas. The other, I know and loved as a person. I had love for him dating back to our childhood, and that love was so strong that it overcome the difference between us. The only reason I felt I could not be friends with the person on Twitter was that I had never spent time with him or experienced love for him. If I had loved this person, then our political differences would not have been enough to separate us. God looks at us all with love, and the more we grow spiritually, the more we should be able to see people the way God sees them: with love. Right now, our love towards people is usually for personal reasons. However, we can get to a place where we love people not because of our shared history, but because they are one of God's creations.

Let me give you another example to show you how powerful love is. In some countries, there is a death penalty for murder. I saw one case where two friends were arguing and one of them lost his temper. He pushed the other, who fell and was unfortunately killed.

In this case, there are two mothers. One is the mother of the deceased, and the other is the mother of the person who for a moment lost his temper and pushed his friend. The mother whose child was killed wants justice for her son and asks for revenge. The other mother is also not at all happy about the crime. She hates that her son is now a murderer. But at the same time, she cannot bear to see him executed. She may approach the other mother and say, 'When my son ended up killing your son, I too died inside! But this is my son! I took care of him. Do you know how many difficulties I went through? How many sleepless nights I spent by his bedside? How I used to feed and hold him? How I took him to doctors and cared for him when he was ill? How many occasions I could not sleep but rather stayed up the whole night? I know what he did was wrong, but I just cannot see him die. I just cannot. Is there any way you can forgive him? Is there any way at all?'

There is a person here who everyone agrees has done something terribly wrong. But there are two ways of seeing him. Looking at it from the outside, which of these two mothers should we side with? The mother who wants justice

for her son, or the other mother, who wishes her son could get a second chance at life?

Why do these mothers have differing views? Well, one of them sees the potential for goodness in this person. She remembers all the good he has done when he was younger. Perhaps once he even took care of her when she was ill. She knows that he can be a good person, and out of her love for him, desperately wants him to get a second chance. She does not want his journey to end as a murderer. She wants him to live longer and redeem himself. So whilst she sees the fault in him, and is not happy about it, she also sees more. She sees all the love she has shown him, and all the love he showed her in return. She looks at him with love and sees a whole package. That is why she does not want him to get killed.

Judgement without love asks for justice. Judgement with love asks for grace and forgiveness. God in the Qur'an acknowledges people's rights, and their desire for justice, but tells them if they manage to forgive it would be even better. In the next chapter we will continue this discussion.

In the same way that the mother of the murderer knows her son has done wrong, but still has hopes for him, God has hopes for every single one of us. Even when we make mistakes, God does not give up on us. God has shown so much love and care to us from before we were even born and so does not give up on us easily. God looks at every single one of us with a thousand times more love than this mother

has for her child. This mother has spent perhaps twenty years taking care of this child and she could not bear to see him suffer or die, despite all the mistakes he had committed. In Du'a 'Arafah however, Imam tells us that God has loved and cared for us for thousands of years. Even before we were born, God carried us through history, from generation to generation, waiting for the right time for us to be born. Our mothers did care for us, but it was God who put our love in their hearts and gave them milk to feed us. God did all of this for us, so how can He see us perish now? In Du'a Kumayl we read:

هَيْهَاتَ أَنتَ أَكْرَمُ مِنْ أَن تُضَيِّعَ مَن رَبَّيْتَهُ

> Far be it from You! You are more generous than to allow the one that you have nurtured to be wasted.

If that mother can look at her one child with love, and as a result not want him to perish, then what of God, who has surely looked at every single one of us with a thousand times more love than that mother? This is why Imam Husayn (a) says:

لَمْ يَمْنَعْكَ جَهْلِي وَجُرْأَتِي عَلَيْكَ أَنْ دَلَلْتَنِي إِلَى مَا يُقَرِّبُنِي إِلَيْكَ، وَوَفَّقْتَنِي لِمَا يُزْلِفُنِي لَدَيْكَ

> My ignorance of You and my audacity have not stopped You from showing me that which takes me near to You and from leading me to that which grants me proximity to You.

Imam Husayn (a) and all of his family lived this way. They looked at humanity with God's eyes. If you learn to look at everybody the way God looks at them, then you can never stop loving them. They may commit mistakes which you are unhappy about, and which pain you, but you cannot stop loving them, because you know how much energy and care God put into every single human being.

Imam Ali (a) showed forgiveness even to the person who attacked him and caused his fatal injury. In Instruction 23 of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, given shortly before his martyrdom, Imam Ali (a) says

> وَإِنْ أَعْفُ فَالْعَفْوُ لِي قُرْبَةٌ، وَهُوَ لَكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ، فَاعْفُوا (أَلا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللهُ لَكُمْ)
>
> If I forgive, it is for me a means of nearness (to God), and for you a good act. Therefore, do forgive. "What! Love you not that God should forgive you?"[1]

How is it possible to forgive your murderer? This act of Imam has been a source of inspiration and change for many people. There are people who have started believing in God because they realised that the God who inspires Imam Ali (a) to forgive his murderer is a God worthy of worship.

This is the same love that Imam Husayn (a) showed to Ḥurr. Ḥurr's crime was not small: he was the one who stopped the

[1] Imam referred to the verse 24:22 of the Qur'an.

army of Imam Husayn (a). Arguably, if it were not for Ḥurr, then none of the events of Ashura would have happened. In a way, he initiated everything. He commanded Imam and his family to halt until he had further commands from Ibn Ziyad. However, as soon as he realised his mistake and came to Imam Husayn (a) asking for forgiveness and begging to join him, Imam welcomed him with open arms! Ḥurr hung his head low in shame, but Imam Husayn (a) told him to lift it. Yes, he had made mistakes, but to Imam all of that was in the past.

It is important to point out that this love and forgiveness is not just for Ḥurr. All of these things that we read in Du'a 'Arafah are not just for one person, they are for all of us. Do you know how much love God has shown you? Do you know how important you are? The love and care of God is for every single person!

> لَمْ يَمْنَعْكَ جَهْلِي وَجُرْأَتِي عَلَيْكَ أَنْ دَلَلْتَنِي إِلَىٰ مَا يُقَرِّبُنِي إِلَيْكَ، وَوَفَّقْتَنِي لِما يُزْلِفُنِي لَدَيْكَ
>
> My ignorance of You and my audacity have not stopped You from showing me that which takes me near to You and from leading me to that which grants me proximity to You.

Can we not say that Imam Husayn (a) embodied this sentence when it comes to Ḥurr? The *Jahl* (ignorance) and *jur'ah*, (audacity) of Ḥurr did not stop Imam Husayn (a) from allowing him to come closer to him, and to God. It is plain that these lines are not just words between Imam and God,

but rather something the Imam embodied on the day of Ashura. This is why we should not look at Ashura only as a tragedy with Imam Husayn (a) as the victim; rather, Imam Husayn (a) is the pride of humanity.

This is the Imam Husayn (a) that you should teach your children about. When your child makes a mistake you should say, 'It is totally fine, come back, come back.' And then, later on, when your child asks you about Imam and who he is, you can tell them that you learnt the forgiveness you have shown them from Imam Husayn (a). This is the culture of Imam Husayn (a): to forgive.

There is a mind-blowing hadith from Imam Husayn (a) in which he says:

> لَوْ شَتَمَنِى رَجُلٌ فى هذِهِ الأُذُنِ (و أَوْمى اِلَى اليُمْنى) وَاعْتَذَرَ لى فى الأُخرى، لَقَبِلْتُ ذلِكَ مِنْهُ
>
> If someone comes to one ear and swears at me, and then comes to the other ear and apologises, I will definitely accept their apology.[1]

Imam is teaching us how to become Godly. God forgives quickly and without hesitation and we have to try and be the same. Imam teaches us to accept an apology even if we doubt the sincerity of it. Instead of trying to prove what they did was wrong or that their apology is not good enough, Imam

---

[1] Tustarī, Nūrllāh, *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*, vol. 11, page 431.

Husayn (a) says he will just forgive. Even if the person does not fully mean the apology, at least there is still a part of them which knows their words were wrong. Imam says be on the side of this part, the part that knows they were wrong, not the part that made the mistake.

This is what Imam Husayn (a) teaches to humanity. He shows us that we can reach a level at which we can look at people in the same way God looks at them. When we speak about forgiving, do not think of your enemies. Many of us struggle even to forgive and let go of the mistake of our partners, our parents, or our children.

Imam Husayn (a) shows us that there are heights that we can achieve whereby we become so infused with God's love that we look at people with that same love, and it becomes easy for us to forgive them. In order to get there, we have to ask God for His love. The reason we find it difficult to forgive is that we are hurt and our heart's capacity for love is not full. We need to ask God to fill our heart with so much love that it fills every gap in every corner of our soul and heals every wound we have. We would then be so full of love, that it would gush out of us and we could easily forgive others.

This is how our beloved Prophet (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt were, always so kind and forgiving to people. They would keep going to God, and He would fill them with so much energy and love that no matter what people did to them, they would never lose their balance or cool. Look at how God describes the Prophet's character in the Qur'an:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

> And indeed, you are of great moral character. (Qur'an 68:4)

God also explains what would have happened if the Prophet (s) was not as loving as he was:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ لِنتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ ٱلْقَلْبِ لَٱنفَضُّوا۟ مِنْ حَوْلِكَ

> By receiving love and mercy from God, you [Prophet] were gentle in your dealings with them. Had you been harsh or hard-hearted, they would have dispersed and left you. (Qur'an 3:159)

This verse is incredibly important, as it tells us a lot about how the Prophet (s) had such great moral character. The reason he would never lose his temper or get angry with people was because he was 'receiving love and mercy from God'. As we said earlier, once God's love comes into a heart, it brings so much joy and peace that nothing anyone does can take that inner peace away.

There are some beautiful verses in the Qur'an in which God reminds the Prophet (s) that he needs to keep returning to God to recharge his energy, so that when he is amongst the people, he can handle all of their shortcomings with love. Look at the following verses:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْمُزَّمِّلُ. قُمِ ٱلَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ... وَرَتِّلِ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ تَرْتِيلًا

> O you who wraps himself [in clothing]. Arise [to pray] the night … and recite the Qur'an in a measured way. (Qur'an 73:1-4)

Just like a beloved asking his lover to visit in the middle of the night, God is setting a midnight meeting with the Prophet (s), telling him to talk to God and read His words in the middle of the night, when there is no distraction.

وَٱذْكُرِ ٱسْمَ رَبِّكَ

> And remember the name of your Lord. (Qur'an 73:8)

Remember your Lord, and that He is the one in charge of everything. He is the *Rabb.* All affairs are in His hands. He has your back. He loves you. When He is protecting you, no one can harm you. Why should the Prophet (s) remind himself of God's love and care? The Qur'an answers:

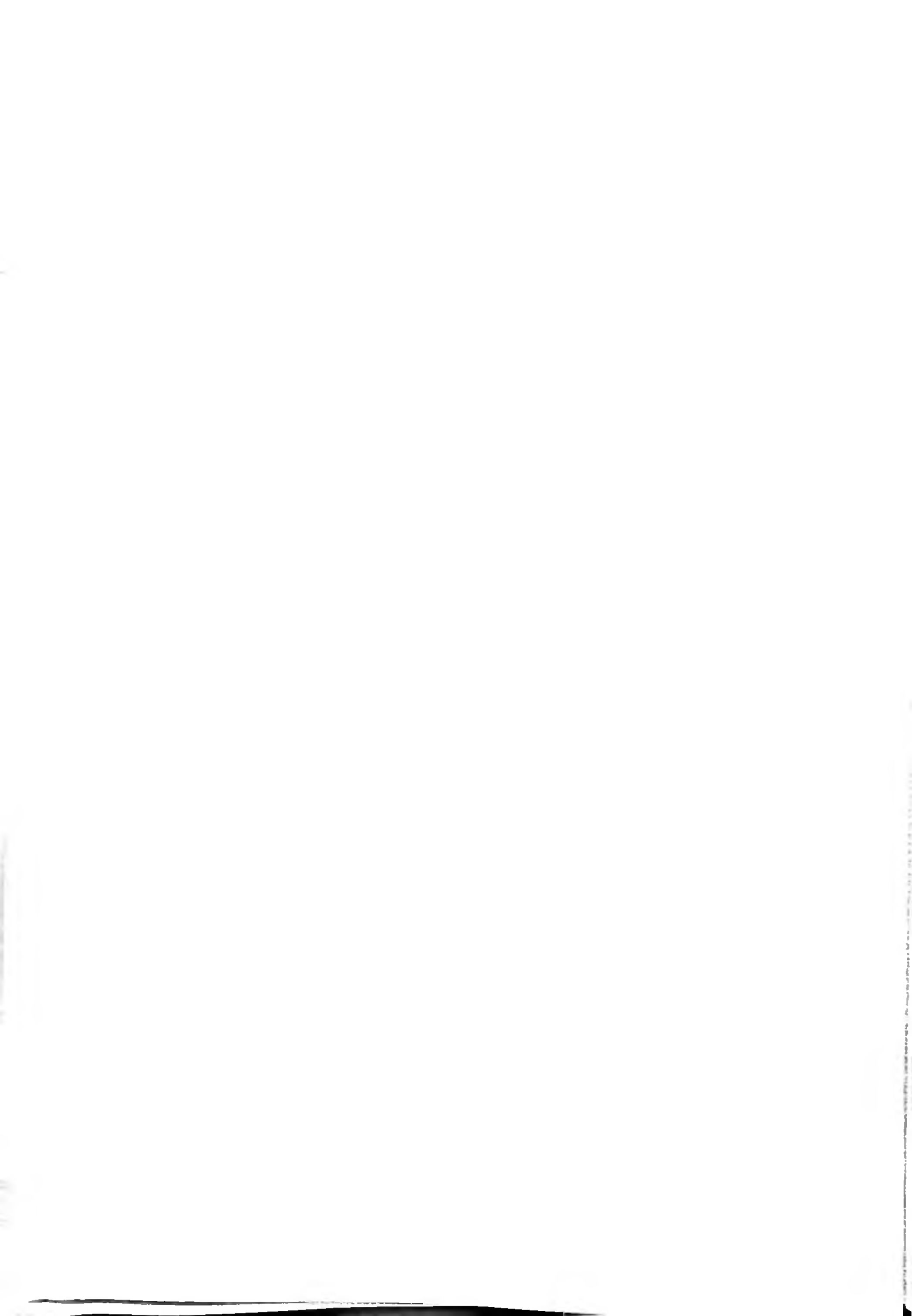
إِنَّ لَكَ فِى ٱلنَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا

> Indeed, for you by day is prolonged occupation. (Qur'an 73:7)

The Prophet (s) had so much to do during the day. He had to interact with so many people who wished him harm, and despite that, he had to remain balanced and loving. God said that for that to be possible, he needed to keep recharging himself by remembering God's love and care.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter we learned from Imam Husayn (a) that God's love for us is so strong that even when we defy Him, whether out of ignorance or audacity, He still continues to love us, and give us second chances. We learned that in the same way that a mother does not give up on her child and sees beyond their shortcomings, God looks at us with so much love, overlooks our shortcomings and is always ready to answer us if we call him. We also learned that the Prophet (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt also looked at people in the same way that God does, and were quick to forgive and give people second chances.



Chapter Five

Feeling Loved Leads to Shukr

In the previous chapters, we read about God's special love and attention to *insān*. We discussed the many ways in which God cares for and looks after every single one of us. In this chapter, we will discuss what happens when a person sees the hand of God at every stage of their life. The more they see how God has been taking care of them, the more they will feel loved. This feeling of being taken care of and loved is then expressed through *shukr*.

This takes us to the next phrase of the du'a, in which Imam Husayn (a) is describing his gratefulness to God. It is as if suddenly a portal opened through time, and Imam saw God's love from the time of his childhood, through his formative years, all the way until today, all very real and in front of him. That is why, at this point in the du'a, his whole existence is that of *shukr*.

عَظُمَتْ آلاؤُكَ فَأَىُّ نِعَمِكَ يَا إِلٰهِى أُحْصِى عَدَداً وَذِكْراً أَمْ أَىُّ
عَطَايَاكَ أَقُومُ بِهَا شُكْراً وَهِىَ يَا رَبِّ أَكْثَرُ مِنْ أَنْ يُحْصِيهَا الْعَادُّونَ

Infinite are your bounties, so which of your blessings my Lord can I enumerate by

> counting and mentioning? For which of Your gifts am I able to give thanks? They are, O my Lord, too numerous to be counted by counters.

These are not just words, or even concepts. These are expressions of a real feeling within the Imam. It is as if he is seeing all of God's blessings in front of him, and he does not even know where to begin thanking Him. Every phrase of the du'a has been a remembrance of God's love and blessings.

Neither is the gratitude that the Imam is expressing just out of politeness. It is, as we said, a real expression of how he feels. Let us elaborate on this with an example. Imagine a person is asked if they love their partner. They will respond that they do. They are reporting. There may not be that much emotion whilst they say it. But sometimes, it is more than just reporting. Imagine the same two partners on their honeymoon. They are so excited to be together. They will keep on saying how much they love each other, but this time it is not just a report. Every time they say it, it is full of emotion. It is as if they are saying it for the first time.

This is how Imam Husayn (a) is saying the phrases in this du'a. He is not just reporting; he means every line with every iota of his being. And despite all of this, he still feels like he cannot express his gratefulness to God enough. He feels like he cannot do justice to God's love, so he says:

فَسُبْحانَكَ سُبْحانَكَ مِنْ مُبْدِئٍ مُعِيدٍ حَمِيدٍ مَجِيدٍ

> So, all glory be to You; all glory be to You. You are verily the originator and reproducer who is worthy of all praise and full of all glory.

Imam is saying that as beautiful all the things we have said about God are, He is still better than them. *'Subḥanaka'* is a beautiful phrase. In English it is often translated as 'Glory be to You'. However, it means so much more. It means that however highly we think of God, He is still higher and grander than that.

I sometimes wish we could have been there to witness the Imam on the day he was reciting this du'a and talking to God. It must have been a beautiful scene; a love story between an affectionate God and one of his most beautiful souls. Sometimes when people are in love, they say things like, 'I love you with every part of my being.' You can see the same thing happening here between Imam Husayn (a) and God:

> وَأَنَا أَشْهَدُ يَا إِلٰهِي بِحَقِيقَةِ إِيمَانِي وَعَقْدِ عَزَمَاتِ يَقِينِي وَخَالِصِ صَرِيحِ تَوحِيدِي وَبَاطِنِ مَكْنُونِ ضَمِيرِي
>
> And I bear witness, O my God, by the truth of my faith, and the fortitude of my conviction, and my pure and open belief in Your Oneness, and the hidden essence of my conscience.

It is like he is trying to express himself, but words are not doing justice, because the experience is grander than words. Imam is telling God that every fibre of his being is in so much awe because of what God has been doing for him:

وَلَحْمِي وَدَمِي وَشَعْرِي وَبَشَرِي وَعَصَبِي وَقَصَبِي وَعِظامِي وَمُخِّي وَعُرُوقِي وَجَمِيعُ جَوارِحِ

And my flesh, my blood, my hair, my skin, my nerves, and my windpipe, my bones, my brain, my veins, and all of my organs.

With all of these, he bears witness to the fact that he sees God's blessings and he sees God's love. It is as if this religious experience that Imam Husayn (a) is having in the du'a is so overwhelming that every inch of his body seems to be a part of it. It is as if his whole body, spirit and existence are testifying to God's love.

أَشْهَدُ ... أَنْ لَوْ حاوَلْتُ وَاجْتَهَدْتُ مَدَى الأَعْصارِ وَالأَحْقابِ لَوْ عُمِّرْتُها أَنْ أُؤَدِّيَ شُكْرَ واحِدَةٍ مِنْ أَنْعُمِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ

(By all that) I bear witness that if I try my best and strive throughout all ages and all times, if I live them, to thank properly only one of Your favours, I will not be able to do that.

Pay extra attention to the word 'witness'. You can only say you have witnessed something when you have seen it. Unfortunately, in our case, we have not seen a lot of these things. Imam Husayn (a) told us that God loved us before we were even born. But have we felt that? Is it a part of our experience? Perhaps not yet. It can be, but it is not yet, so for us, because we have not seen it yet, we cannot say that we witness. This is what makes this du'a so special. A person who has witnessed God's love for humanity is now teaching us all that God loves us, and that we can get to a place where we

feel it too. This is the most beautiful and hopeful news anyone could ever give us.

Often, I am asked what Imam Husayn (a) offers to humanity. One of the most important things is that he reached such a height in his spiritual journey and then reported from that level: telling us that God loved us all before we were even born, and that He continued to love us at every stage of our life. This is not something that we have seen ourselves, or that we could have known otherwise, but it is something we desperately need to hear; we need to realise how loved we are.

This is how powerful du'a can be. Du'a is not just reading and reciting lines that we do not understand. Du'a is a real connection with God. In du'a, you see things you could not previously see. It is an experience. Hopefully, by reflecting on Imam's du'a, we can be inspired to initiate our own du'a and connection with God. With this, religion takes on a new meaning for us. For example, we know and accept that God is the source of greatness (*Allah-u Akbar*). But knowing is one thing; experiencing is another. We can live in such a way that we feel God's greatness, and all our challenges and problems then look small in comparison.

Spirituality is the journey through which the knowledge that we have about God and life moves from our mind to our heart. For example, I once heard from a scholar that after years of reflecting on *Allah-u Akbar*, one day it was revealed to his heart. He had an encounter with God, and it was so

great that he fell to his knees. He had performed *sajdah* for many years, but this was the first time it had happened naturally. He had encountered the greatness of God, and it was so awe-inspiring that he simply fell to his knees in praise. That is a true *sajdah*: when a human being feels the greatness of their Lord and their own utter need and dependence on Him.

In the next phrase of the du'a we see another example of this. Imam witnesses the truth of a verse of the Qur'an and he means every single word when he recites:

> فَسُبْحانَهُ سُبْحانَهُ ﴿لَوْ كانَ فِيهِما آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللهُ لَفَسَدَتا﴾ وَتَفطَّرَتا
>
> So, glory be to Him, glory be to Him. "If there had been in the heavens or earth any gods but He, both heavens and earth would be in ruins"[1] and destroyed.

If you are reading this book in your house, you might look out of the window and see perhaps some of your building, and a few neighbours on each side. If you climbed a hill, then you might see many houses, or even a whole area. If you boarded a plane, you might even see a whole city. In du'a, our soul goes so high that it can witness the whole world, and that is the height from which Imam Husayn (a) is commenting. From his vantage point, Imam Husayn (a) looks at the world and sees God's hand behind everything. From there, he can

---

[1] Imam referred to the verse 21:22 of the Qur'an

see God is the only Lord, and there is no power or deity besides him.

And then Imam witnesses the truth of another verse of the Qur'an and testifies that:

> وَأَنْتَ الْمُخْبِرُ فِي كِتابِكَ النَّاطِقِ وَالنَّبَأ الصَّادِقِ ﴿وَ إِنْ تَعدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللهِ لا تُحْصُوها﴾
>
> You have informed [us] in your book, a book that speaks of true news that, "if you were to count God's blessings, you would not be able to enumerate them."[1]

Imam truly sees this and feels the reality of this verse in his heart.

Shukr Cannot Be Forced

After reading this beautiful encounter between Imam Husayn (a) and God, we cannot just copy him and say, 'O God your blessings are so much, I cannot thank you enough'. It would be forced and insincere. It is better to pray, 'God, I would love to be able to reach that stage where this is no longer forced.'

It is always best to be honest with ourselves. It is fine to admit that right now, when we look at the world, we do not see blessings all around ourselves, but rather trouble and shortcomings. We have not yet had that kind of experience

[1] Imam referred to the verse 14:34 of the Qur'an.

that Imam Husayn (a) has, when he says '...my nails, my eyes, my neck, the openings of my breath channels...', are all thanking God. That is undoubtedly a beautiful level, but it comes after witnessing the world in a whole new way and cannot be forced.

A lot of the time, because we have good intentions, we want everyone to love and thank God. So we may force our children to thank God. This forcing does not work, because *shukr* is the fruit, and before you can harvest the fruit, you first need to enable the tree to grow. First, we have to feel God's love for us and the blessings He sends. Once we have witnessed this, we can testify to it, which will naturally lead to *shukr*.

Allow me to give you an example. A few years ago, I was invited to run a workshop for a lovely group of teenagers. After the programme, one of the parents, who had really enjoyed my programme, thought it might be a good idea for her child to take a photo with me. I am sure her intentions were good, but the child was clearly not interested. The mother kept insisting that he should take a photo with 'the Shaykh'. I tried to discourage her, but clearly, she was stronger than both of us. We took the picture, and her child looked incredibly grumpy in the photo.

Throughout, I remember thinking how unnecessary this was. If he does not want to take a photo, why force him? This way, he will have a bad memory associated with me. Maybe he

won't want to come to my workshops anymore. Of course, his mother's intention was good. But if you force your son to take a photo with the Shaykh, chances are that whenever he sees the Shaykh, even as an adult, he will have a bad memory attached. Better to just allow the child to be authentic.

The same applies with God. You cannot force yourself to thank God. If right now you are not at that level, that's OK. Ask God to give you eyes that can look at the world and see blessings like Imam Husayn (a) or like Lady Zaynab (s), who was at a state whereby she could look at what took place in Karbala and see beauty, despite all the tragedies:

مَا رَأَيْتُ إِلَّا جَمِيلاً

I saw nothing but beauty.[1]

If we had said this, it would have been a lie. If we are not yet at the level to be *shākir*, that is fine. Instead, we can pray, 'God help us by giving us the eyes to see your blessings.' Because when we truly see, then the natural result would be to thank.

According to the Qur'an, *shukr* is actually one of the highest levels we can reach. We even have a verse that says *shukr* is more important than *taqwā* which means that *shukr* is not something that we should expect from ourselves early on in the journey.

The verse encourages us to first have *taqwā*, so that we may become *shākir*. *Shukr* is a very high state. Elsewhere in the

---

[1] Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, Ali ibn Mūsā, *Al-Luhūf 'alā Qatlā al-Ṭufūf*, page 94.

Qur'an, Shaytan challenges God, and says that he will deceive every single human being and stop them from doing one thing. What was this one thing that Shaytan thought was so important to stop humans doing, in order for him to triumph over God? It was *Shukr*!

ثُمَّ لَآتِيَنَّهُم مِّن بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَن شَمَآئِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ

> Then I will most surely come at them from before them and from behind them and from their right and from their left, and you will not find most of them grateful. (Qur'an 7:17)

The Path of Shukr

God says in the Qur'an:

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِراً وَ إِمَّا كَفُوراً

> Surely, We guided *insān* to the path, be them grateful or ungrateful. (Qur'an 76:3)

This is one of the most powerful verses of the Qur'an. It has the power to change our attitude towards life if we internalise its message. There are two ways of living in this world. One is to see ourselves as an independent being, who has to find his or her way in the world and take care of him or herself. If we subscribe to this way of thinking, we will be plagued with regrets, because we cannot change our past, and we will struggle with worries, because we cannot predict our future. The second way is one in which we see our connection with

God. Here, there is no pressure to take care of ourselves; God was doing that before we were even born!

In the first way of experiencing the world, our journey has lots of ups and downs, and it can be so tough that it has led many human beings to dislike life itself. As long as we feel alone with our pain, we can never be fully grateful. However, if we manage to grow into the second way of being, and are able to feel God's love and care for us, life becomes sweet, and something we can actually be grateful for.

Throughout the du'a, Imam has taught us that God has been taking care of us at every step of our life, and that he has a plan for us. We are one of His most special creations. When the angels criticised us and said we were going to make lots of mistakes, God defended us: we were worth the trouble to Him. The Creator of the universe loves us, and the day we start seeing this, is the day all our problems fade into insignificance. If we want to experience *shukr* and enjoy life, we need to read the lines of the du'a about how God has been taking care of us, and remind our heart of how much it is loved by God.

Earlier, we mentioned that God's love is unconditional: it does not waver depending on what we do. Even our good actions do not lead to more of God's love for us.

إلٰهي تَقَدَّسَ رِضاكَ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ عِلَّةٌ مِنْكَ فَكَيْفَ تَكُونُ لَهُ عِلَّةٌ مِنّي؟

> God your pleasure is too sanctified to have a cause from You, so how could it ever be caused by me?

Imam Husayn (a) is teaching us that it is not our actions that can cause God's pleasure. In fact, nothing can create a change in God's state. God's love for us is already there. You might ask what the point of leading a good life is, if God already loves us? Well, God loves us unconditionally, but how much can you feel that love now?

Everything we do in our life is to open our heart so that we can feel more and more of God's love. Our prayer, fasting and whatever other acts of worship we perform have to increase our capacity to feel and receive God's love (which is always there). God's love is akin to the bright sunshine on a summer's day, and our good actions, such as fasting and praying, are like going to the window and opening the curtains to let the light in.

If that happens, then there is nothing to worry about anymore. If that veil between us and God is removed, all our problems are instantly resolved. It is in the places within our heart where this love has not yet reached that fears, pains, and bad qualities grow. Once God's love enters the heart, it will fill every gap and heal every wound. Any time we make a mistake, it is a sign for us that there is a part of our heart that needs love from God. When we feel jealous, when we feel unworthy, when we feel a strong unwanted desire, when we want to seek attention from others; all of these feelings are

signals from our heart that we need God's love. Once we learn to feed our souls, all of these problems will disappear. How can we enable our soul to feel God's love? Well, we are already trying one of the best ways, and that is to remind ourselves of all that God is and has been doing for us, in this case, by reading Du'a 'Arafah.

Chapter Summary

Shukr is an inner state that occurs once we see the world in a different way. Once we start to see God's love and blessings all around us, the natural outcome is that life begins to appear beautiful and pleasant to us, and that is *shukr*. It can either be a feeling of joy in our heart, or we can bring it to our tongue and express it verbally. But it comes from our heart, which is why it cannot be forced. It is either there in our heart, or not.

Shukr is an inner state. If internally we are not in a good place, we may not see the beauty even in the best things that occur. If the inner environment is not right, we are not going to enjoy life. Naturally, we cannot be grateful. Even if we express gratitude verbally, it will not be real. This is because gratitude is the natural result of the pleasure we feel inside.

If we open our heart to love and beauty through our relationship with God, as a result of our growth, we will develop an inner state and an inner eye with which we can see the enormous amount of blessings that are there for us in this world. Gradually, we will get to a place where we feel God's unconditional love for us, and realise that everything in this

universe is created for us to grow, so that we may experience more and more of God's love. We do not need to gain God's love, for that is already there. Our good actions just open our eyes, so we can feel the love which is already there.

Chapter Six

God is Awesome!

In this chapter, we study another important passage of the du'a that includes a prescription for our spiritual growth:

اللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي أَخْشاكَ كَأَنّي أَراكَ

> O God, [please] instil in me *khashyah* towards You [so that it is] as if I see You.

Unfortunately, this part of the du'a is often translated incorrectly, with many texts rendering *khashyah* as fear. Therefore, it is necessary to give some context to what *khashyah* actually means before we can continue our discussion.

Khashyah is not Being Scared

Many have interpreted *khashyah* as being scared of God. Not only is this incorrect from a literal perspective, it also goes against everything we have learnt thus far from Imam Husayn (a) in Du'a 'Arafah. The one reality in this world that is on our side and is always there to help us is God. He is the only reality in the world who will always have our back. Thus, to translate *khashyah* as being scared of God is very wrong. We will come back later to why we should not be scared of God generally.

But for now, I will try to show that even if it is possible to be scared of God, it is certainly not what *khashyah* means.

Khashyah in the Qur'an

The main evidence for the meaning of *khashyah* comes from the Qur'an. In Surah al-Fāṭir we read:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

> Only the knowledgeable are in awe of God. (Qur'an 35:28)

According to the Qur'an, only the *'ulamā'*, the knowledgeable ones, have *khashyah* of God. Bear in mind that in the Qur'an, the 'knowledgeable' are of a very high rank. Not every person we would generally call a scholar meets this criterion. In fact, most scholars themselves would acknowledge that this verse is not referring to people like them, but rather to truly special *'ulama'*. The Qur'an says only *this* group have *khashyah.*

Now, I would like to pose a question to you. If *khashyah* meant being scared of God, would this verse make sense? Is it the case that only the people of knowledge are scared of God? I know first-hand of many people who are extremely scared of God, to the extent that it causes them serious anxiety, yet they are not people of knowledge. I know many youth who are so scared that they feel they cannot even talk to God, because every time they think about Him, they get anxious. Of course, there is a spectrum; some are less scared, and some are more. But either way, it is clear that being scared is not a high level attained only by the *'ulama'*. So, the

khashyah which the Qur'an says it is only achievable by the truly knowledgeable must refer to something else.

There is another verse in the Qur'an that is used by our scholars, namely Allamah Tabatabaei in his Tafsir of *al-Mīzān*, to show *khashyah* is not the fear of God:

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنْذِرُ مَنْ يَخْشَاهَا

> Your duty is only to warn whoever has *khashyah* of it [the hereafter]. (Qur'an 79:45)

Allamah points out that if *khashyah* meant being scared, what would be the use in warning those who are already scared of the hereafter? Rather, he explains that *khashyah* refers to those who are aware and mindful of the hereafter.

Khashyah Leads to Being Happy with God

There is more evidence in the Qur'an regarding the true meaning of *khashyah*. According to the Qur'an, when a person has *khashyah* with regards to God, it leads to them being happy and pleased with Him:

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنهُمْ وَ رَضُوا عَنْهُ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهُ

> God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. This is for those who have *khashyah* of their Lord. (Qur'an 98:8)

We can surmise that *khashyah* must be a quality that leads to the person being happy and pleased with God. Conversely, we know that many people are scared of God, to the extent

that it stops them from approaching Him, let alone being pleased with Him.

When Imam Husayn (a) asked God to give him *khashyah* so that it was as if he could see Him, he did not mean that he wanted God to make him scared; that would be antithetical to the whole content of the du'a. As we said previously, Imam acknowledges in the du'a that God took care of him before he was even born, then caused him to be born, then made his parents loving towards him, gave him milk through them, and so on. He says that he would be unable to count God's blessings if he tried. Why, then, would he suddenly say, 'Make me scared of you?' It does not make sense!

If there is one being in the world from whom there is nothing to be scared of, it is God. He is the Source of beauty, the Source of love and the Source of mercy. Thus both the Qur'anic evidence and the context of the du'a show that *khashyah* cannot mean being scared. What then, does *khashyah* mean?

What Does Khashyah Mean?

Khashyah is how a person feels inside after they have realised God's Greatness. They feel a complete dependence on God, and as a result, their hearts become soft and modest towards Him. The more we see how everything in this world is in God's Hands, the more we feel our need for His support. Our hearts realise that we cannot survive without Him; that He is

the only truly independent being; and that our life, power, and knowledge is from Him, and out of His mercy.

Earlier we gave the example of a pen writing calligraphy. To recap, you can either believe the pen is writing the calligraphy, or you can go a level higher and realise that the hand is writing, using the pen, or you can go a level higher still and realise that there is actually a person writing, using the hand. The same is true with the world; you can either look at this world and see people performing actions and events occurring, or you can look deeper and see God's power behind them all.

When a person teaches us something, we can either see the knowledge as coming from them, or we can see it as coming from God. When someone shows us love, we can either feel the love as coming from them, or realise that God is showing love to us through them. In the early phrases of the du'a, Imam Husayn (a) notes that it was God who instilled love towards us into the heart of our caretakers.

This is what it means to have *khashyah*: to be able to look at the world and see God behind everything. Once you reach this stage, you realise that God is enough for you. You would not be desperate for the help of others, as you know that every person is ultimately getting their power from God:

ٱلَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ ٱللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا ٱللَّهَ
وَكَفَىٰ بِٱللَّهِ حَسِيبًا

> Those who convey the messages of God and have *khashyah* of Him, and have no *khashyah* of anyone except God. And God is sufficient to take account [of everyone]. (Qur'an 33:39)

This was one of the qualities of the prophets. They did not have *khashyah* towards people; rather, they had *khashyah* towards God. Again, I have to emphasise, this does not mean that they were scared of God and not scared of people. No, it means they saw all the power in the world as belonging to God. They knew that God is the source of all greatness and all power, so they were not in awe of any power that their enemies may have had. They understood that even that was ultimately from God.

Khashyah towards God vs. Khashyah towards People

There is a beautiful point here that can really help us in our lives. If we think that our destiny is in the hands of people, we may easily become worried. What if they do not like us? What if they harm us? What if they take something away from us? This is why believing that power belongs to people and having *khashyah* of them leads to worry. But if we realise that all power and knowledge that people may temporarily possess ultimately belongs to God, then we would no longer worry. People may want to harm you or to become your enemy, but God is always a friend. Even if people do become your enemy, God can take care of you. Thus, having *khashyah* of God leads to our serenity and pleasure:

رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَ رَضُوا عَنْهُ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهُ

> God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. This is for those in awe of their Lord. (Qur'an 98:8)

God is our *Rabb*, our protector and our guardian. He takes care of us, and He loves us even more than our parents. If He is in charge, then there is nothing to be scared of, but if people are in charge, then there is lots to be scared of. What if they get annoyed at me? What if they don't like the way I look? What if we have had a bad history? What if they become jealous of me? For all these reasons, they may decide to cause me harm, so *khashyah* of people leads to being scared of them. *Khashyah* of God, however, does not mean being scared of Him. *Khashyah* of God is realising that God is in charge, and this is actually great news!

ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ٱسْتَوَىٰ

> The Most Compassionate, established on the throne. (Qur'an 20:5)

The One who is in charge of the universe is the Most Compassionate. The One in charge is Merciful. This is something to rejoice in! The more we feel God's Power and Greatness, the more we should rejoice.

We look around and see oppressive superpowers and greedy corporations, all of whom want to take advantage of us. But *khashyah* of God reminds us that they are all in reality only

small players in a great world whose throne belongs to the Merciful One.

قُلْ بِفَضْلِ ٱللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِۦ فَبِذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا۟ هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ

Say, O Prophet, 'In God's grace and mercy let them rejoice. That is far better than whatever wealth they amass.' (Qur'an 10:58)

Chapter Summary

In this chapter we read a very important phrase from the du'a:

اللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي أَخْشاكَ كَأَنِّي أَراكَ

O God, [please] instil in me *khashyah* towards You [so that it is] as if I see You.

We learnt that *khashyah* does not mean to be scared of God; rather it means to look beyond people and events and see God's Hand behind everything. Any knowledge, beauty, or power we see in this world comes from God. We learnt from Imam Husayn (a) that even when our parents showed us love, it was in reality God who was showing love to us, through them. Once we feel this reality, our heart becomes at peace and we no longer have cause to worry, as we know our loving God is in charge of everything and that He will take care of us.

As our *khashyah* grows in life, we become ready for one of the most liberating stages of our spiritual journey: surrender.

Chapter Seven

Surrender

Let us reflect on the journey Imam Husayn (a) has taken us on so far in this du'a. He started by describing the love God has had for *insān*, even from before our birth. He explained that once we reached a certain age and could engage in dialogue, God began communicating with us: directly, through our heart; by way of the events in our life; and via messengers. He then spoke of the satisfaction a person would feel after they experience God's love and attention in their life. This would lead them to two beautiful qualities: first, *shukr*, which is the expression of gratitude towards God for all that He does for us; and second, *khashyah*, which is a way of looking at the world in which we see God's greatness and power behind everything.

Imagine you have reached a stage where you feel God's love and care in every area of your life, where you see that He is the only source of power in this world, and that He loves you more than your own parents. What would you naturally want to do? Imam Husayn (a) answers the question for us. Once you truly feel God's power over everything and His infinite love for you, you want to allow Him to take care of you.

Of course, God was taking care of us even before this realisation. But the problem is that we were not aware of it, and so we thought we had to take care of ourselves. Indeed, that was the source of all our worries and anxieties, because no matter how hard we try, we still cannot control everything. As soon as we realise that we do not actually need to control everything, and that there is a loving Reality who has got our back, our heart suddenly finds peace. A great pressure is lifted from our shoulders and we finally surrender to God and leave our affairs to Him:

> اِلهی اَغْنِنی بِتَدْبیرِک لی عَنْ تَدْبیری وَبِاخْتِیارِک عَنِ اخْتِیاری
>
> My Lord, make Your management of my affairs replace my management of my affairs. Make Your choice for me replace my choice for myself.

This is an attempt to invite God into every moment of our life and every decision that we make. At every crossroads, we realise that we can either rely on our own limited knowledge and experience, or we can invite God with His infinite power and knowledge to help us.

Of course, this is not an easy stage to reach. Many of us still believe that we really can take care of ourselves. We think that we can figure out the best options. It is with the benefit of hindsight that we slowly realise that maybe we needed help. We realise that often, despite our best efforts, our poor decision-making actually pushed us further away from our goals. We see that sometimes we worked towards something

we really wanted, and that we thought was good for us, but once we achieved it, we saw it was not as good as we had imagined, or realised that we did not like it. In some cases, it may even have been bad for us. At times like this, if we are mindful and honest, we begin to realise that maybe we do not always know what is in our own best interests. Maybe sometimes we make mistakes when we try to take care of ourselves. Maybe we do not have to do everything on our own. Maybe we can get help from a Reality that loves us. This is when our hearts slowly open and allow room for God to enter.

Tawakkul and Riḍā

There is a beautiful hadith in which Imam Ali (a) is narrating the story of the Prophet's ascension (*mi'rāj*). This was a hugely significant night: perhaps the most special moment in the history of humanity, when a human being rose so high in levels of spirituality 'that he was only two bows'[1] length away [from God] or even less[2]. In this important meeting, the Prophet (s) asked God:

يا رَبِّ أيُّ الأَعْمالِ أفْضَلُ؟

What actions are the best?

If you were asked this question, how would you respond? Would you say prayer, or perhaps fasting? God answered:

---

[1] Qur'an 53:9

[2] Of course, this is metaphorical language, showing the extreme proximity of the Prophet (s) to God.

لَيْسَ شَيْءٌ عِنْدي اَفْضَلَ مِنَ التَّوَكُّلِ عَلَيَّ وَ الرِّضى بِما قَسَمْتُ

There is nothing better to Me than relying on Me and being pleased with My decree.[1]

Out of all the things God could have said, He mentioned *tawakkul* and *riḍā*. Allow me to explain these two terms using an analogy. Imagine you are travelling by car to a new destination a few hours away. As the route is new to you, you have to remain alert. There is heavy traffic and you are becoming exhausted. You end up making a few wrong turns, which makes the journey even longer. You still drive on, but it is getting darker now, and you are becoming even more tired and sleepy.

Your friend is accompanying you on the journey, but you have never driven with him before and so you do not know how well he can drive. Every now and then, he offers to take over if you are tired. Sometimes, he gives suggestions as to which route to take to avoid traffic. You take his advice a few times and he's right; the route he suggested was far better. Your trust in him grows. As you become sleepier still, you decide to give him a chance and let him take over the driving, so that you can rest a little. You stop at a safe place, switch seats, and let him sit behind the steering wheel.

As he takes over, you already feel better, because you can finally stretch your arms and legs a little after hours of sitting in a fixed position. You are still a little worried though; you

[1] Daylamī, Ḥasan ibn Muhammad, *Irshād al-Qulūb*, vol. 1, p. 199.

have not seen him drive before, and so despite being sleepy, you remain awake so as to keep an eye on his driving and make sure he does not cause an accident. Sometimes, when he gets close to another car, you become alert and tell him worriedly to be careful. Even though you have given him the wheel, you are not fully at ease. You cannot sleep. After a while, however, you see how skilled and experienced he is as a driver. The way he manoeuvres the car, the way he checks for other vehicles when he is making a turn, and even the routes he chooses to avoid traffic, are all great, and better than you would have managed. After seeing this, you begin to relax and fully trust him, because you know you are in safe hands. Before you know it, you have finally stopped resisting; you fall asleep and get the rest you so desperately needed.

What does this have to do with *tawakkul* and *riḍā*? The moment you gave the wheel to your friend and began to rely on him: that was *tawakkul*. The moment you trusted his driving and found peace inside: that was *riḍā*. We have the same relationship with God. For many years, we want to live independently, make our own decisions and control everything. The point at which we start to rely on God and ask for His help in managing our affairs is when we have *tawakkul*. When we begin to trust His management and stop worrying is when we have *riḍā*.

There may be many years between reaching the stage of *tawakkul* and moving to the level of *riḍā*. In the same way that you sat next to your friend as he drove, but still worried about

his driving, sometimes we can rely on God but still be worried that He might not do what would make us happy. In the same way that as a passenger, we might have kept giving our friend feedback: 'Go faster', 'Take that turn', 'No, not this way', sometimes we do the same with God: 'Make this happen quickly', 'No, don't do that', 'I don't want this person involved'. Eventually though, a point comes when we see that everything God does is in our best interests; not just the action, but even its timing. This is when we finally find peace inside. Now we are ready to read the next line from Du'a 'Arafah, where Imam Husayn (a) says:

حَتّٰى لاأُحِبَّ تَعجِيلَ مَا أَخَّرْتَ وَلَا تَأْخِيرَ مَا عَجَّلْتَ

> [When I surrender to you,] I will not long for hastening that which You have delayed, or delaying that which You would hasten.

Once we feel God's love and trust His wisdom, then it becomes easier for our heart to accept the timing of events in our life. There may be things which we eagerly await, but which God, in His wisdom, delays. The reverse is also true. There may be things that we do not want to happen to us; perhaps we do not think that we can handle them. God however, in His love and out of the trust that He has in us, knows that it is better for us to undergo these events. Again, if we trust His love and wisdom, when these events happen, we will not resist, and so it will be easier to go experience them. We are thus more likely to see the reasoning behind calamities. Often, things occur that at the time seem painful,

but later we realise how important they were for our growth. I have personally seen so many examples of this in my life and in the lives of people I have met, that I could perhaps write a whole book on them.

Gradually, as we practice surrender and find peace in the knowledge that God is taking care of us, we become less dependent on external events for the peace and joy in our lives. We know that a loving God is in control, and that as long as we are accepting of His care, whatever happens to us will always be in our best interests.

The people who reach this stage in their spiritual journey learn to experience the events of their life without fearing the painful ones or obsessing over the pleasant ones. They may be in pain, but they are not scared of it. Conversely, they may enjoy the good times, but they do not obsess over them. They know that every event in their life is an experience which will help them grow.

> إِلٰهِي عَلِمْتُ بِاخْتِلافِ الْآثارِ وَتَنقُّلاتِ الْأَطْوارِ، أَنَّ مُرادَكَ مِنِّي أَنْ تَتعَرَّفَ إِلَيَّ فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ لا أَجْهَلَكَ فِي شَيْءٍ
>
> And I have realised, through the diversity of signs and the changes of phases, that what You want from me is to introduce Yourself to me in all things so that there is nothing through which I cannot discover you.

In this phrase of the du'a, Imam Husayn (a) teaches us one of the secrets of spirituality: the main purpose of life is to know

God and His love for us. Each event in our life is a unique opportunity to encounter His love. The events may appear different; they may be easy or difficult, painful or relaxing, but at their core they are all manifestations of love.

Once we realise this, we will not attempt to escape from the difficult events, and we will not obsess over the pleasant ones. When difficult things happen to us, we will try to be patient and learn the lesson of love hidden in them. And when good things happen to us, we will enjoy them, learn the lesson of gratitude and love in them and then move on. We will not remain in the past, and so we can encounter any new experiences with an open heart.

We will be open to life. We will become like children who truly enjoy life. When a child plays, they do so with all of their mind and heart. When they run in the park, they are fully present. They are not thinking about the regrets of the past or the worries of future. They are not consumed by approaching deadlines or by difficult conversations they may have had, and so they are happy. According to Imam Husayn (a), a spiritual person can also reach this stage. The Qur'an describes it as follows:

لِّكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ

> So that you may neither grieve on what has escaped you, nor over-exalt on what He has given you. (Qur'an 57:23)

Currently, the life energy and love that emanates from God has to pass through all the blockages in our heart, and so by the time it reaches us, not much of it is left. Every ounce of resentment, pain, fear and obsession that we keep bottled up inside absorbs a part of this life energy. When we remove these blockages, the entirety of the energy reaches us, and we feel alive and loved.

Of course, this is not something that we can immediately expect of ourselves. This is a level that we reach once we begin to see God's love and care for us. Once we trust that He is there to take care of us, we will open our hearts to His love, and it is this love that has the power to heal our blockages. The fastest way to heal all our traumas and melt all these blockages in one go is to allow the love and light of God to enter our heart.

Inner Peace

As we begin to focus on our inner state rather than any external events, we realise joy and love can only be found internally. No matter how beautiful and controlled the external circumstances, as long as there is no inner peace, we will never be happy. Even if we are next to the most beautiful beach in the world, or in the most comfortable house, if we feel empty or sad inside, we will not enjoy our surroundings. This is why Imam Husayn (a) prays to God:

اللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْ غِنایَ فِی نَفسِی

> O God, make that which strengthens and sustains me to come from within me [as opposed to external events or possessions].[1]

Imam asks God to cause his joy, peace, and strength to come from within him. This can be seen as both a prayer to God as well as a reminder for us that real joy comes from within. Many of us spend our energies trying to change the external world in order to feel better. Often, when we are faced with a stressful event, the first place our mind goes to is how we can change the external world. Imam Husayn (a) is teaching us that we can also look inside and ask for more internal strength. We can explain the difference between inner change and external change by using a simple example. Imagine you have a manager at work who does not appreciate you, or worse still, causes you trouble. Attempting external change would be hoping he gets fired or considering changing your job to avoid him. Internal change would be hoping you can summon the strength inside yourself to solve the issue. For example, that may mean that you build up the courage to go and speak to him assertively about the matter at hand.

Jealousy is another example of a problem that we often try to solve by changing the external world. When we find ourselves jealous of a possession or a quality someone else has, we can either dedicate our whole life to becoming better than them, or we can simply try and see what is missing inside us that is leading to this jealousy. If we opt for the latter, we do not

---

[1] This is a lovely du'a that you may wish to use in your *qunūt*.

need to spend our whole life competing with others, just in order to avoid feeling inferior. Instead, we can fix that insecurity inside and spend our lives doing the things that actually matter and bring meaning to us.

Think about it. Most of our life's energy is spent in changing the external world: getting a bigger house, a better car etc. Of course, there is nothing wrong with trying to improve the external world. The problem occurs when we do these things in order to avoid an issue which has a far easier solution. If I was happy with my house and only wanted a bigger one to match my friend's, or if I have to work harder and see my family less in order to have the same car that he has, this is attempting to be happy by changing the external world rather than looking internally for the real solution.

Imam Husayn (a) tells God that he wants his happiness and inner peace to come from within. Yes, in the external world I may well have an amazing life, but I do not want to depend on that. Ultimately, I only want my peace and happiness to come from within:

اللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْ غِنایَ فِی نَفسِی

> O God, make that which strengthens and sustains me to come from within me [as opposed to from external events or possessions].

Ayatullāh Javadī Amulī makes a very beautiful point about the difference between *ghanī* and *mustaghnī*, both words which

refer to wealth and prosperity. *Ghanī* is a person who feels their wealth is coming from inside. *Mustaghnī* is a person who needs external things in order to feel wealthy and good. A *ghanī* person may not have many material possessions, but yet still be OK because they already have peace and love inside. From within, they have found that connection to God and His unconditional love and energy, and so they do not need external world to give them energy. A *mustaghnī* person, on the other hand, looks to fill the gaps through external objects. A *mustaghnī* person will get their sense of self-worth from their job or possessions, not from within. A *mustaghnī* person will get their joy from purchasing new items.

So, both the *ghanī* and the *mustaghnī* person are looking for the same end results such as self-worth, peace, and happiness. But one looks for it inside, the other wants to gain it from the outside world. The *ghanī* one can be put in any situation and still will feel worthy and loved because that is coming from within them. But the *mustaghnī* becomes very dependent on the external factors. Of course, there is no judgment here. Many of us may find ourselves in the *mustaghnī* category. That is OK. That was the best we could manage. But now we can learn a new way of living.

We can either tap into the unconditional and infinite internal source of energy (*ghanī*), or we can keep looking to external factors to bring some energy in (*mustaghnī*). Imam Husayn (a) asks God to make him from amongst the former group,

whose sense of worth and love comes from within them and as a result of a direct communication with God.

Trying to find peace externally leads to many challenges, largely because the external world is not in our control. If our peace is at the mercy of things which are out of our hands, it can lead to a great amount of stress and worry. It can also gradually turn us into a controlling person, who tries to manipulate people and events to keep them exactly as he needs them to be in order to feel calm. The Qur'an alludes to this:

إِنَّ الإِنسَانَ لَيَطْغَى أَن رَّآهُ اسْتَغْنَى

> The fact is that *insān* crosses the limits when he tries to seek sufficiency [from outside]. (Qur'an 96:7)

The one who wishes to change the external world to feel better will end up becoming controlling and crossing limits. If I do not feel loved, if my sense of inner worth, love, and energy is not internal, what will I have to do to meet these needs? I will have to get them from the people in my life: my friends and family. This is absolutely fine. But it can lead to problems when my friends stop giving me the love that I feel accustomed to. My energy, well-being and self-worth depended on this friendship, and cannot handle it if my friends change, or if they decide to become friends with other people and spend less time with me. I would have to find a way to stop that happening. I would have to find a way to keep them with me, and this would only end up in

manipulation. This could take a variety of forms; I could become aggressive, needy, or maybe even extra nice to keep them with me.

This is why many times, partners or friends cannot tolerate growth in their loved ones. They are used to their friend being a certain way. As soon as their friend start growing or changing, their sense of safety is threatened, and they may try to sabotage the growth of their friend in order to keep them the way they are used to. This is because their own safety and love is not coming from inside, and this is why, according to the Qur'an, when we look for safety and love outside, we 'cross the limits.'[1]

But if we follow the example of Imam Husayn (a), and ask God to enable our joy and peace to come from within, we will become free. Once this happens, we may be in relationships with others, but we will not depend on them for our peace. We do not need them to take care of us, or to make us feel good about ourselves; we already feel loved inside. We are now not in relationships only to receive love, but rather to share it, which instantly makes the connections between us and our friends and partners much stronger.

Let's read the line one more time and this time actually mean every word of it in our heart:

اللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْ غِنایَ فِی نَفْسِی

[1] Qur'an 96:7

> O God, make that which strengthens and sustains me to come from within me [as opposed to external events or possessions].

Gradually, we can reach a stage where so much unconditional love, energy, and peace comes from within, that nothing in the outside world can take it away from us. Once we take care of our self, our inner world, nothing can harm us:

> يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُم مَّن ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ
>
> O you who have attained faith, you are responsible for your (inner) selves; he who has strayed cannot harm you if you are guided. (Qur'an 5:105)

Striving for inner peace (rather than attempting to change the external environment) also negates the needs to rush things, which is good because haste sometimes leads to avoidable mistakes. As we said, we can of course still have a beautiful external life, but we will no longer depend on it for our self-worth.

In turn, this means no longer looking to the world to make ourselves feel better; that is already taken care of. Rather, we look at the world to see what needs to be done to make it better for others. The more people that reach this stage, the more beautiful the world will inevitably become.

Ashura: Surrender in Action

In this section, we will look at a real example of surrender: that of Imam Husayn (a) on the Day of Ashura.

If we look at the du'a like a movie, the phrases we have read so far can be likened to the scenes in which a person is meeting their beloved. Imam Husayn (a) was with God, and with God, everything feels great. When you are with your beloved, you live in the moment. You do not worry about deadlines, duties, or anything else. The more real the love, the better everything feels when you are with your beloved.

In the following phrases of the du'a, the scene is changing. The meeting between the two beloveds is about to finish. As the time of goodbye approaches and you prepare to leave your beloved, there is suddenly a realisation that you will have to leave them and be back amongst other people.

Of course, we know that nothing could distract Imam Husayn (a) from remembering God:

> رِجَالٌ لَّا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَن ذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ
>
> People who are not distracted by commerce nor profit from remembering God. (Qur'an 24:37)

However, even the Imams treasured those one-to-one moments with God, where there were no other people or distractions around. There is a beautiful story about Imam Kaẓim (a), when he was arrested and put in prison, he thanked

God profusely for the gift of time free from the distraction of others, so that he could spend time talking to Him alone.

The Prophet (s) was of course always remembering God, but even he, after a few hours of spending time with people, sometimes felt that he needed special time alone with his Lord, without any distractions. There is a difference between talking to the Beloved one-on-one, free from the distractions of this world, and being with the Beloved in the presence of other people.

Imam Husayn (a) has to go back to life after the du'a, and very difficult days are awaiting him. In this du'a, there are a lot of what appear to be references to the events which later occurred in Karbala. Imam is going to leave his intimate meeting with the Beloved and return to the people. He knows there are those who have bad intentions and wish harm to him and his family.

Imam is perhaps looking to that which awaits him when he prays:

> وَأَعِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَوائِقِ الدُّهُورِ وَصُرُوفِ اللَّيالِي وَالْأَيَّامِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنْ أَهْوالِ الدُّنْيا
>
> Give me strength over the calamities of the ages and the changes of nights and days, and rescue me from the horrors of this world.

Imam does not ask God to take his problems and difficulties away, because he knows God does not want the problems to

be there either. It is people who with their actions cause these problems. It is not God who told Shimr or Umar ibn Sa'd to do what they did. As long as there are people who commit evil actions, problems will continue to exist.

The current state of the external world is the result of the sum of all of humanity's actions. You and I, and everyone else in the world, have created this current situation. God's respect for humanity is so great that He leaves it to us to fix.

This is why many spiritual teachers believe that if humanity collectively decided to fix the world's problems, for example, so that no-one suffered from poverty, they could do it in one day! There is enough wealth in the world today to end human hunger. However, we are reluctant to do this, because we benefit from the current system. We have all got used to this way of living. Of course, there are those who have even more individual power to fix the problems, but their greed and power stops them.

The Imam knew all of this. He knew that it was not God, but rather people, who had made the world corrupt. But he teaches us that even in this world, with all its problems, so long as we are with God, we will be fine. Imam said it in Du'a 'Arafah and then proved it on the Day of Ashura. He proved that no matter what they did to him, he was fine - because he had God with him.

The reporters say that as the Day of Ashura went on, Imam Husayn's face was getting brighter and brighter. You could

see the joy (*sha'af*) on his face. It was not that he was not in pain because of what was happening. Of course, the events were painful. But he was also getting closer and closer to God, and this was bringing him peace and strength.

وَأَعِنِّي

God give me strength.

'Help me: be my strength in the ups and downs and the stresses and calamities of life, in those situations which would be scary without You; in all of these times be with me! There are so many things that I am scared of; be there for me in my heart and help me!'

These are beautiful things for us to ask God! If we feel God by our side, and His love in our heart, then no fear or pain can overwhelm us:

أَلَآ إِنَّ أَوْلِيَآءَ ٱللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

> But surely, for those who are on God's side, there is no fear that can overwhelm them, and they will not be in despair. (Qur'an 10:62)

Imam Husayn (a) and his family are a proof that the life described in this verse is possible and something we can aspire towards. Of course, we may not get there in a day. But it is important that we realise that such a life is possible for us. Life does not need to be so difficult. We can experience beauty even in the darkest days of our lives. Lady Zaynab (s) said about the events of Ashura:

مَا رَأَيْتُ إِلَّا جَمِيلاً

I saw nothing but beauty.[1]

Do not be disheartened if you are not there yet. That's OK! It's never too late. Right now, let us ask God to enable us to feel His love and presence during difficult and challenging times. The next line of the du'a is one that we can begin reciting in the *qunūt* of our prayer, or perhaps at night before we sleep:

اللّٰهُمَّ مَا أَخَافُ فَاكْفِنِي

> God, in whatever I am scared of, take care of me, and enable me to feel that your care for me is enough.

There are so many things which can be scary if we do not feel that God is there with us. But with Him, we can take on any challenge. You may already have faced problems that you really did not imagine you could handle, but somehow you found the strength to push through. This shows you just how strong you can be through God. You can get to a place where you are fine, no matter what life throws at you.

In the next phrase of the du'a, Imam recites a few lines which are heart-breaking if we read them in light of the events that were to follow in Karbala. Imam says:

وَفِي سَفَرِي فَاحْفَظْنِي

In my journey, take care of me.

---

[1] Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, Ali ibn Mūsā, *Al-Luhūf 'alā Qatlā al-Ṭufūf*, page 94.

وَفِي أَهْلِي وَمالِي فَاخْلُفْنِي

And take care of my family after me.

It is as if Imam is asking God to be there for him and protect him during his journey to Karbala; as if he knew that he would soon leave his family behind, and he is asking God to take care of them. One of the beautiful things which the Imam is doing is to extend the connection he has made with God during the du'a. Let me elaborate with an example. Many of us may find peace and safety with God during a spiritual period of our life. For some it could be during a Hajj trip, for others, during the month of Ramadan. We feel a connection with God, and a sense of spirituality that changes the way we feel about life, but we are often worried as to how to keep that feeling going once that time is over. How can we keep the same spirituality and connection to God when we are back at work and busy with family responsibilities?

If this is something you have struggled with, the solution is in the words of Imam Husayn (a): it is to realise that the same God that we connected to during our Hajj trip or in the month of Ramadan is with us afterwards too. If our only aim from fasting in the month of Ramadan or performing Hajj is to feel spiritual, then once these events are over, we may struggle to remain spiritual. However, if we use these actions, or any others, as a tool to strengthen our relationship with God, then we will not lose that bond, because God is everywhere. He is with us at work. He is with us at home. He is with us when we feel overwhelmed. *God is everywhere.*

Imam Husayn (a) is in exactly the same situation when he is reciting this du'a. During the du'a, he is on the plains of Arafat talking to his beloved God and feeling very connected. He knows that soon, he will leave this place, and that very difficult days lie ahead. However, he also knows that the same God who is with him on this day will be with him even in those most darkest of days, and so before the du'a is over, he looks to the future, and asks God to enable him to continue feeling His presence and care:

> إِلىٰ غَيْرِكَ فَلا تَكِلْنِي، إِلٰهى إِلىٰ مَنْ تَكِلُنِي، إِلىٰ قَرِيبٍ فَيَقْطَعُنِي أَمْ إِلىٰ بَعِيدٍ فَيَتَجَهَّمُنِي
>
> Do not leave me to anyone other than yourself. To whom would You leave me? To the people close to me who are going to cut me off? Or the strangers, those far from me, who are going to try to humiliate and disgrace me?

These are all rhetorical questions through which Imam Husayn (a) is reminding his soul that even if circumstance has made it seem that strangers are dominant over him, God is still there, and He has not abandoned him. In that moment that the connection with God is strong, he thinks forward to those times in which the connection may be more difficult to keep, and he strengthens it from now.

Imagine a little girl who is about to sleep. Her mother comes to her room and gives her a goodnight hug and kiss. In that moment, it is so easy to feel the love and care of her mother. But she may worry about what happens when her mother

leaves the room. What if she gets scared? What if something happens that she cannot handle? So, she thinks ahead and ensures that even in those situations, her mum will still be there for her. She asks, 'Mum, if I get scared in the middle of night, if monsters attack me, will you come to help me?' Obviously, her mum will come and help her. Of course her mother's love and care for her is there throughout the night. The more the little girl feels this, the stronger she will be. The same is true of us and God. Sometimes we feel His presence and love more strongly, and in those moments, we need to reassure our souls that God is always there for us. In fact, God never even leaves the room. The only problem is that sometimes we do not feel His presence. So, He reminds us, just like a loving parent, that He is always there for us, and that He watches over us to make sure that we are fine:

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ وَٱللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

> He is with you wherever you are; He sees all that you do. (Qur'an 57:4)

The moment we realise how loving God is towards us and how present He always is, life becomes much more beautiful. We should ask him to help us feel that He is there for us even when others may want to hurt or harm us.

أَمْ إِلَى الْمُسْتَضْعِفِينَ لِي

> [God, to whom would you leave me?] To those who want me weak?

In these lines, Imam teaches us that even when we feel left on our own with people who may want to hurt us, we still can connect to God and gain strength from Him. Look at the very next line:

وأَنتَ رَبِّي وَ مَلِيكُ أَمْرِي

You are my Lord and the Master of my affairs!

Imam is teaching us that it is natural to sometimes feel alone. It is natural to feel that life is very difficult, but we should not allow this to stop us from feeling God's presence; because that is the only solution. If you have complaints about life, take them to God. If there are things that are too difficult to handle, talk about them with God. If you feel you are alienated:

أَشكُو إِلَيْكَ غُرْبَتِي وَبُعدَ دارِي

> I complain to You about my alienation and remoteness of my abode.

If you feel oppressed and overlooked:

وَهَوانِي عَلَىٰ مَنْ مَلَّكْتَهُ أَمْرِي

> [I complain to You] that he whom you have given responsibility over me despises me.

Earlier, we asked where Imam Husayn (a) got the strength to be able to handle the day of Ashura. The answer is in these lines. He took everything that was difficult for him to God, and asked Him for strength and love. Objectively, Imam's life was in no way easy. Even overlooking all the difficulties that

he went through early in his life, such as losing his beloved mother at a tender age, he still underwent a lot of pain. At this point in his life, where he is talking to God on the plains of Arafat, he is about to go on a journey that will lead to his martyrdom, as well as that of his children and companions, and a great amount of difficulty for his surviving family members. He knew that there were many who wanted to humiliate and harm him and his family.

It is important for us to realise this context, because during the previous chapters, when we looked at how Imam spoke about God's care and love, one could say that the reason Imam was happy with God was that he had an easy life. However, in these lines, Imam shows us that feeling God's love is not just the preserve of those who have an easy life. In the very moment that he was immersed in God's love, he was also fully aware of all the difficulties and pain that he was about to experience. This is one of the most important secrets of spirituality: pain cannot stop love. Imam Husayn (a) shows us how to merge pain and love together and find God's love in amongst the difficulties.

This one formula can solve all the world's problems. In order to be immersed in love and to see beauty in this world, our life does not have to be perfect externally. No pain or difficulty can stop us from finding inner peace and feeling loved inside. The solution is to take your pain to God, and to ask Him to fill you with love and peace:

أَشْكُو إِلَيْكَ غُرْبَتِي

I complain to You about my alienation.

This is exactly what Imam Husayn (a) is doing. He tells God that he feels like a stranger in his own hometown. He tells Him of the people who want to harm him, and of all his other problems.

We can constantly take our difficulties, challenges and sufferings to God, complain about them, and ask for strength and love. Gradually, the love between us and God will grow so strong that we can take on any challenge. However, it can get even better.

Initially, we may only go to God to complain and gain strength, but then, during this back and forth between life and God, a spark of love is struck, and we start to fall so in love with God that He becomes our entire world. If at first, we only went to Him to complain about our life, now we become so mesmerised by His beauty and love that He becomes all that we care about. He becomes our life, our strength, our friend and much more. See how Imam Husayn (a) describes God in the next few phrases of the du'a:

عُدَّتِي فِي شِدَّتِي

My means in my hardship!

صَاحِبِي فِي وَحْدَتِي

My companion in my loneliness!

غِيَاثِي فِي كُرْبَتِي

My relief in my agony!

There is nothing other than love that can give us this peace and healing power. This is the love between us and our Creator, and through Him, between us and every single thing that He has created. It is this love that gave Imam Husayn (a) and Lady Zaynab their strength and calm. It is this love that made them so beautiful, even when they were attacked on the darkest moments of the day of Ashura. They did not see anything but beauty, and nothing came out of them other than beauty. All of their words were calm, controlled, and beautiful. They did not lose their control. Pain did not make their heart hard. That peace was the result of a lifetime of communication with God.

Ashura: A Love Story

In the next phrase, Imam recites a beautiful line that shows what can happen when a person strengthens their relationship with God:

فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ غَضِبْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلا بَالِي سِوَاكَ

> Nothing matters to me as long as you are not upset with me.

The feeling expressed here cannot happen in any place other than between two people who are in love. Imam is basically telling God: 'All I care about is you. If you are happy with me, then nothing else matters.'

We can learn from the Imam that if we keep going to God with both our joys and pains, our relationship with Him will eventually reach a place whereby He becomes our whole world. We become so overwhelmed with love and closeness to Him that we feel we have achieved all we want and more. Nothing else bothers us. Nothing can annoy us.

When you are in love, all that matters to you is if your beloved is happy. Think of a parent who loves their little baby so much that all they care about is for their child to be happy. They sacrifice so much just so that their baby is fine. Think of a husband who would do anything just to ensure his wife's happiness, or someone who goes out of their way to make sure their friend is fine. Think of a grandmother who suffers with aches and pains, but still gets up to prepare a meal when her grandchildren come to visit. This is the power and beauty of love.

Imam is so immersed in God's love that all he wants is for God to be pleased with him. When we are in love, we keep thinking of how we can make the beloved happy. We keep asking them if they need anything. We may even buy them a gift and still apologise, 'I am so sorry if it's not good enough, or if it's not beautiful enough'. Of course, not in a negative and anxious way, but in a tender and beautiful way. Have these in mind and let's read the next phrase:

لَكَ ٱلْعُتْبَىٰ لَكَ ٱلْعُتْبَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَرْضَىٰ

> I will seek to please You till You are pleased with me.

We too can have the same relationship with God. We just need to follow in their footsteps, approach God and ask Him to help us feel His love. Unfortunately, a lot of what we have been told about God has stopped us from wanting to approach Him. We need to refresh our understanding of God, letting go of what others have told us about Him, and instead taking our understanding from Imam Husayn (a). He introduces a God who is so easy to approach, a God who is loving, a God who forgives mistakes, a God who never stops his kindness, a God who loves us unconditionally and a God who is gentle. Once we start a connection with this beautiful God, and the connection becomes real in our heart, then it gives us strength in difficulties. This is the only way to find peace, calmness, and beauty in the world.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we learnt that we can get to a stage in our life where we begin to feel God's love and care for us in every aspect of our lives. We begin to realise that He is the only source of power in this world, and that He loves us even more than our parents do. Once we grasp these truths, the natural outcome is that we start to rely on Him in our life. We realise that we no longer need to take care of ourselves on our own, but that there is a Reality that we can rely on. This is *tawakkul.*

In the early stages of *tawakkul*, we try to rely on God, but our heart is not fully at peace. We ask Him for help, but we want Him to help us in the way we want. We are not yet ready to trust His plans fully. We become worried if life takes a turn that we had not planned for. But after seeing, unexpectedly, that the results of what we have left to Him turn out to be excellent, we begin to trust in His planning. At this stage, not only do we rely on Him, but we also start to trust that He may have plans for us which are better than those we have for ourselves. This is *riḍā*.

Just like *tawakkul, riḍā* also has stages. The more we taste the sweetness of God's planning in our life, the more fully we trust Him. Prior to this, we may believe that our happiness and peace depend on certain external events, and so we constantly ask God to make them happen. But after God shows us that our happiness and peace come from inside, we experience love and peace in situations we did not expect. At this point, we realise that ultimate happiness and love can only come internally, and that God knows how best to grant these to us. We fully surrender to His planning and ask Him to take complete control of our life, to help our hearts grow and learn whatever is needed to reach a place of inner joy and love. This is surrender.

Finally, we spoke of a real example of surrender: that of Imam Husayn (a) to God. We learned from Imam Husayn (a) that a relationship with God is not limited to the special occasions or happy days in our life. Rather, God is present in every

moment of our life, even the most difficult days. The more we go to Him with our pains and complaints, the more we feel His love and care for us. Pain cannot stop love. We can gain love and strength from God so that no matter what happens in our life, we are able to handle it. God becomes our friend when we are lonely, our strength when we feel weak, and our joy when we are in pain.



Chapter Eight

Looking at Life Like Imam Husayn (a)

In the last chapter we discussed how Imam felt internally with regards to the events he anticipated would take place in Karbala. We discussed his surrender to God and the inner peace that resulted from it. The more we become familiar with Imam Husayn's (a) outlook on life, the more we realise that we have been interpreting events incorrectly. For example, many of us may look at the events of Ashura and think that Imam Husayn (a) lost. You may even have attended mourning sessions where people say things that indicates that they believe the Imam was defeated.

This shows that there is a difference between the way Imam Husayn (a) looks at the world, and the way in which we interpret things. This becomes clear in the next passage of the du'a:

> أَنْتَ كَهفِى حِينَ تُعيِينِى الْمَذاهِبُ فِى سَعَتِها، وَتَضِيقُ بِىَ الأَرْضُ بِرُحْبِها
>
> You are my safe haven and my sanctuary when the earth, with all its greatness, does not seem to have a place for me.

This is an incredibly emotional part of the du'a, especially if you read it in light of the events of 'Ashura. Continuing, we see how the Imam interprets the difficult things which happen to him. Does he see them as a failure or a victory?

وَلَوْلاَ نَصْرُكَ إِيَّايَ لَكُنْتُ مِنَ ٱلْمَغْلُوبِينَ

> Had it not been for your help, I would have been among the defeated.

The Imam was not unaware of what was going to happen on the Day of Ashura. Why then, does he still believe he will not be defeated? The apparent contradiction is because the way we perceive Ashura is very different to the way Imam Husayn (a) viewed it. Imam considered it a day of victory, despite losing his friends and family in tragic circumstances.

Redefining Victory

How does the Imam look at the events that led to his martyrdom and still consider himself victorious? What victory is this? If we are able to understand his point of view, it will help us to see our own lives in a new light. To do this, we need to revisit our discussion on *insān*.

We discussed how *insān* is the special project of God and has been put on earth for a great purpose. God shows a great amount of love and care to every single one of us, and this love begins before we are even born. *Insān*'s purpose is so valuable that it is worth giving it the freedom to explore and make mistakes, so that it can gradually find itself. *Insān* is the

only being in the world to whom God gave a part of his own power: the ability to create freely.

Every single human being is a part of this hugely important Divine project which God explained to his angels. The angels told God that they were happy to continue glorifying and praising him, but He replied that instead, he wanted a being who could understand His love. The only being who is capable of understanding His love is *insān,* because it is the only being that does not exist in a limited spectrum. It can move from the infinite depths of evil to the infinite heights of beauty. *Insān* is the only being that can find in itself the beautiful qualities of God: knowledge, beauty, power, and the combination of all of them: love.

God shows an indefinable amount of love and care to every single person as part of this Divine project. Why? So that each person can enter this world, learn, grow, and reach the level of becoming His *khalīfah* on earth, i.e. a being who can mirror and reflect His beauties. For example, our beloved Prophet's beauty was a mirror through which we can see and learn about the beauty of God.

To the extent that we try to live godly lives, and follow in the Prophet's footsteps, we can also reflect God's beauty to the world. Every time we smile, help a person in need, or show love to others, we are reflecting God on earth. The opposite is also true. Every time we hurt others, we are stopping the

light of God from being reflected. We are stopping the manifestation of God's beauty and love.

It is as if Imam Husayn (a) sees every person as a tree on which God has lavished so much love and care, and which will only bear fruit if it grows to its full potential. When a person does not reach their potential, it is as if all the love that God showed them did not bear fruit.

Imagine a gardener who invests lots of time on nurturing a tree, which is now not bearing fruit. Who is going to be the most upset over this? The gardener. Who is our gardener? God. *Rabb* means the one who takes care of us all: the gardener of the garden of the universe.

This is why Imam Husayn (a) cried *for* his enemies. Imam did not look at those who wished him harm as just enemies. No. Imam Husayn (a) saw them all as trees that God had spent so much time and resources on, but which were now not bearing fruit. These trees that were destroying themselves and wasting all the resources that had been invested into them.

This is why, for Imam Husayn (a), defeating his enemies was not about physically destroying or killing them. Not at all. Defeating his enemies was about helping them to change so that they were no longer his enemies. Defeating them was helping them to realise how much love and energy God had spent on them, so they would perhaps come over to God's side, start taking their lives seriously, and begin to act as human beings should.

وَأَنْتَ مُؤَيِّدِي بِالنَّصْرِ عَلَىٰ أَعْدَائِي

You are my help against my enemies.

When we try to understand Imam Husayn (a), we have to be very careful that we do not lower him to our own level. We may think that Imam wanted help from God to kill his enemies or defeat them physically because that is how most of us envision defeating an enemy. But when we look at the events of Ashura, we realise that the help Imam wanted from God was to be able to soften their hearts and win them over. This is what he did with Al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Rīyāḥī, who was a commander in the enemy's camp. On the last day, Ḥurr's heart finally softened and he joined the side of the Imam. He had done so much wrong when he was a commander, for which he felt genuine shame, but Imam told him to 'hold his head high' and not to dwell on his past anymore. Imam accepted him wholeheartedly. This is victory. There were also many others like Ḥurr who joined the side of Imam Husayn (a).

Instead of cutting down these barren trees, Imam Husayn (a) wanted to help them to start bearing fruit. He succeeded, for Ḥurr and for so many other souls on that day. His legacy was to be integral to an event that till today, hundreds of years later, still helps people find their way back to God.

Think of how much energy he invested into bringing people to a side that was going to be, on the face of it, defeated. On the Day of Ashura, there were thousands of people on one

side and only a few people on the other, but there were still some who risked their life to join Imam Husayn's side. These were trees saved by Imam. What sort of change occurred inside these people, that after ten days of being against the Imam and causing him pain they decided to join him? They saw that no matter what they did to this man, he was still beautiful. He never crossed any limits. He never did anything wrong. Imagine how beautiful Imam Husayn (a) was, that he made many of his enemies fall in love with him, to the extent that they left the more powerful side for an inevitable death! This is the Divine help that Imam Husayn (a) asked for:

وَأَنْتَ مُؤَيِّدِى بِالنَّصْرِ عَلَىٰ أَعْدائِى

You are my help against my enemies.

The same is true of his father, Imam Ali (a). Whenever Imam Ali (a) was forced into battle, he would use every opportunity he could to speak to the enemy and try to win some of them over, so he could bring them back to God. This was true victory in the eyes of the Ahlul Bayt (a): to win hearts and bring souls back to their loving God.

There is a beautiful hadith from Imam Ali (a), in which he reports a message that the Prophet (s) had given him:

لَأَنْ يَهْدِىَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَى يَدَيْكَ رَجُلًا خَيْرٌ لَكَ مِمَّا طَلَعَتْ عَلَيْهِ الشَّمْسُ وَ غَرَبَتْ

> If the Almighty God guides one person through you, it is better for you than all on which the Sun has risen and set.[1]

Saving even one soul is better than the whole world. This was how Imam Ali (a) understood victory. The same is also true of Imam Sajjad (a). In his Du'a Makārim al-'Akhlāq, there is a beautiful passage that can really change the way we understand things. The Imam asks God to help him against those who have harmed and left him. But what is it that the Imam wants to do to those who harmed him? Does he want to get revenge, and if so, what type?

> سَدِّدْنِي لأَنْ أُعَارِضَ مَنْ غَشَّنِي بِالنُّصْحِ وَأَجْزِيَ مَنْ هَجَرَنِي بِالْبِرِّ وَأُثِيبَ مَنْ حَرَمَنِي بِالْبَذْلِ وَأُكَافِئَ مَن قَطَعَنِي بِالصِّلَةِ وَأُخَالِفَ مَنْ اغْتَابَنِي إِلَى حُسْنِ الذِّكْرِ وَأَنْ أَشْكُرَ الْحَسَنَةَ وَأُغْضِيَ عَنِ السَّيِّئَةِ
>
> Strengthen me to oppose him who is dishonest toward me with kind advice, repay him who leaves me with goodness, reward him who deprives me with generosity, recompense him who cuts me off with connection, face him who slanders me with positive mention, give thanks for good, and overlook mistakes.

Look how the Imam changes the entire meaning of revenge. His is the proper way to treat those who have harmed us. Of course, this may be too hard for us now, but we should at least consider this the standard to aspire towards.

---

[1] Kulaynī, Muhammad ibn Yaqūb, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 5, page 36.

If we then consider Imam Husayn (a) the defeated party, or if we allow loss to be the dominant theme of Ashura, have we done justice to his vision? Of course, there is sadness and tragedy, but it goes against the clear words of Imam Husayn (a) if we consider this the main theme.

وَلَوْلا نَصْرُكَ إِيَّايَ لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمَغْلُوبِينَ

> Had it not been for Your help, I would have been among the defeated.

Creating a Paradigm Shift

From here onwards, Imam is attempting to create a paradigm shift in how we view things. So far, we have considered the difference between how we perceive victory and loss, and how Imam Husayn (a) did. Imam struck a massive victory for humanity when he showed that you can be alone and thirsty, see your family subjected to so much difficulty, but still behave beautifully.

There are many who claim that everyone has their price. They say that if you keep people hungry enough, they will forget their values and begin to fight over food. If people are exposed to lots of pain, then they will become violent. To some extent, they are right; scarcity does make most people act selfishly. During the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic, we saw that some elderly people struggled for access to food or hygiene supplies because others had hoarded everything. It seems that for many, love, tolerance,

and care are only there so long as they are not desperate for toilet paper.

In such a world, where a lot of us fail to respect our own humanity, Imam Husayn (a) showed that it is possible for *insān* to act beautifully, no matter what they are going through. He quenched the thirst of the same people who deprived him and his family of water. In the heat of the battle, surrounded by enemies, when he had lost so many of his close friends and family, he was approached by his little girl and he treated her with so much love. He did not tell her off. He did not even talk to her distractedly. He dismounted his horse and came down onto his knees, so as to be the same height as his daughter, and said, 'the light of my eye, what do you want?' This is the biggest victory, not just for Imam Husayn (a) bu for all of humanity. He showed that there is still hope fo *insān*. He showed us why God did not give up on humanity: because it is possible for us to reach such a level.

Imagine *insān* was being tried in a court of law, in the presence of the angels and all of God's other creation. The other creations may well want to prosecute *insān*:

قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ ٱلدِّمَآءَ

> They said [to God], 'How can You put on [earth] someone who will cause damage and bloodshed? (Qur'an 2:30)

It is a very good question, which many of us also pose. What is the point of humanity? We get jealous. We fight. We allow

so many of our own to remain in poverty. Imam Husayn (a) is the voice in the middle of all of this doubt that shows that it does not have to be like this. It as if he says, '*Insān*! You are greater than you think. I know that right now you may not feel it, but there is so much beauty in you. You can reach a level where you too show love to the one who harms you'. This is why when we look at Ashura, we should not see it as a defeat. Imam Husayn (a) considered himself victorious.

He showed the angels why God loves *insān* so much: because we can attain a level where we are so loving and beautiful that no matter what others do to us, we will respond with nothing but love and beauty. This is a Godly quality. *Insān* can reach a level where it can reflect God in this world, and that, in a nutshell, is why *insān* is so special.

Imam continues:

فَاوْلِيَاؤُهُ بِعِزِّهِ يَعْتَزُّونَ

His friends get their dignity through Him.

In this world, all *'izzah*, dignity, power and beauty belong to God. When we allow God into our hearts, He brings all of these qualities with Him. Imam tells us that our main task is to become beautiful like God, by allowing Him into our hearts. We all have this potential to be God's mirrors on earth, and it is because the Almighty sees this potential that He is so patient with us. It's up to us to realise our own worth, and that of Imam Husayn (a). When we truly see what he did for us, it will enable us to perceive everything differently.

Before this paradigm shift, we may have looked at Ashura and seen defeat. But now, looking at things the same way God and Imam Husayn (a) do, we see the victory, dignity and *'izza* of Imam and his family. Only then we can truly testify that they were the most beautiful and honourable people on this earth, despite all that happened to them.

If we think, or imply, in our mourning sessions, that Imam was defeated and his honour was compromised, then despite claiming to be with him, we are seeing things in the same way that 'Umar ibn Sa'd and Ibn Zīyād did. Be very careful; you can think you love Imam Husayn (a), perhaps you genuinely do, but you can still be looking at the world very differently to him.

It is not easy for us to change our perspective and begin to see the world in the same way that Imam Husayn (a) did. We are so set in our ways. But hopefully, with the discussion here, we are slowly trying to make a shift. Take your time with this chapter and think about it as much as you need to. Ask yourself why you might think Imam was defeated, when he considered himself victorious? Explore this question, because the more you reflect on it, the more your vision will become like that of Imam Husayn (a). Another important question to think about is this: what do I consider a victory in my own life? Do I feel I have succeeded when my soul reflects the beauty of God, or is it when I reach a gain in the physical world? What is success in my view, and how does it match with success and victory in the eyes of the Imam?

This is not easy, and that is not a problem, because in the next chapter, we will consider more examples. In the next part of the du'a, Imam Husayn (a) mentions the stories of a few people and shares with us how he sees their life. In every story, he trains us to see things like him. The main distinction between our outlook and Imam Husayn's is that we only see outward manifestations: what happens in the physical world. Conversely, Imam sees the deeper meaning of each situation, and God's hand behind it.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we spoke about what we consider victory and loss, and how very different this is from Imam Husayn's view. Imam saw each person as a tree on which God had lavished love and care. This love and care would only have been worth it if the tree bore fruit, and grew to its full potential.

According to the Imam, our victory is not in what we gain in the physical world, but rather in the state of our souls. A soul that finds its way back to God, and as a result becomes beautiful, has gained the most important victory. There are so many people who have great material wealth and possessions, but real success is for those who grow in character, such that their soul becomes a mirror of God's beauty. These are the people the world desperately needs: the ones who can love the way God does, the ones whose inner calm makes the world a more beautiful place. Our Imams devoted their lives to helping others become this way; every soul they helped to become more beautiful, they considered a great victory.

Chapter Nine

God's Planning

In the last chapter, we tried to look at life through the eyes of Imam Husayn (a), and we discussed how Imam had a very different understanding of what constituted victory and success. In this chapter, we are going to reflect on examples of people who, according to Imam, achieved victory in their lives. Consider this chapter as a workshop on 'How to Look at Life like Imam Husayn (a)'. If you ever wondered wha went on in the heart and mind of Imam Husayn (a), this your chance to get the answer.

As you will see, one of the main factors in the way Imam Husayn (a) sees the events of the world is that he sees the role of God at every single moment.

Prophet Yūsuf

Imam Husayn (a) starts the discussion by mentioning God's role in the life of a few prophets. The first example he gives is that of Prophet Yūsuf:

> يَا مُقَيِّضَ الرَّكْبِ لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْبَلَدِ الْقَفْرِ وَمُخْرِجَهُ مِنَ الْجُبِّ وَجاعِلَهُ بَعْدَ الْعُبُودِيَّةِ مَلِكاً، يَا رادَّهُ عَلَىٰ يَعقُوبَ بَعدَ أَنِ ابْيَضَّتْ عَيْناهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ
>
> O He Who directed the caravan towards Yūsuf in the wasteland, took him out of the pit, and made him king after enslavement! O He Who had returned him to Ya'qūb after his eyes became white on account of the grief.

Many of us are familiar with this story, as it is mentioned in the Qur'an as well. But now let's look at it afresh, through the eyes of Imam Husayn (a). We will see that for the Imam, this story was an example of God's planning and God's help.

Imam says God, through His amazing Divine plan, helped Prophet Yūsuf through all of his difficulties. Initially, his brothers threw him into a well, after which a caravan came and picked him out. The caravan took him to Egypt, where he spent some time. He was sent to prison. Eventually, he was released, became a governor and was reunited with his father.

This story teaches us a lot about how God's planning works and the methods He uses in order to turn our life into a beautiful story. One of the most important points in the story of Prophet Yūsuf is the timeframe. When we read the story, we quickly reach the happy conclusion where he has great status in Egypt and is reunited with his family. What we need to appreciate is the length of time it took for him to get to this end point.

God does not want to interfere with people's decisions and take their free will away, and so He works by inspiring hearts, and this takes time. It is easy to force change on people. But that is not what God wants; He respects our decisions. We discussed earlier that God loves humanity so much, he has given them the freedom to act according to their will. He does not stop that. Have you ever wanted to do something, and suddenly your hand would not move, and you were stopped? No; you have the freedom to do whatever is within your powers, and this is out of God's unconditional love and respect for *insān.*

Of course, there are times when a person does not want to commit a bad action, but they are tempted, their will is weak and so they give in. In these situations, God may give them extra help by making it harder for them to commit that mistake and harm themselves. For example, they may want to go somewhere they know will be bad for them, and as they try to leave the house, the door may get stuck. Of course, even in these cases, God does not take the person's free will away. If they insist on proceeding with the wrong action, they can try harder to open the door and leave, but God just gave them another opportunity to stop. Because He does not take our freedom away, it takes time for Him to get us to our end destination. He wants to help us and direct us towards a way of life that is good for us, without forcing us or the other people in our life, because He respects our choices.

As we said earlier, God works through inspiring hearts. This heart suddenly gets an inspiration to do something. Think back, for example, to when Prophet Yūsuf was thrown into the well. A caravan is passing by, and suddenly they get an inspiration to go and check the well, which leads to them finding Prophet Yūsuf and rescuing him. God did not send angels to save him. No, God works through ordinary means. He works through the hearts of people, and this is in an important point: *God has a very subtle and delicate way of planning.*

Even in the Qur'anic story of Prophet Yūsuf, God is referred to as *Laṭif*, subtle in the way He plans. One of the main reasons this story is mentioned in the Qur'an is to train us to look at the world and see God's delicate planning. This planning is not just for Prophet Yūsuf and Imam Husayn (a). It is for every single one of us; we just need to learn how to see it.

> وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ ٱلسِّجْنِ وَجَآءَ بِكُم مِّنَ ٱلْبَدْوِ مِن بَعْدِ أَن نَّزَغَ ٱلشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِيٓ إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِّمَا يَشَآءُ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلْعَلِيمُ ٱلْحَكِيمُ
>
> [Prophet Yūsuf said] 'He was truly kind to me when He freed me from prison and brought you all from the desert after Satan had ignited rivalry between me and my siblings. Indeed, my Lord is subtle in fulfilling what He wills. Surely, He alone is the All-Knowing, All-Wise.' (Qur'an, 12:100)

It is very important for us to realise that from the very beginning of Prophet Yūsuf's story, God had a plan to take care of him. He planted seeds in the hearts of various people who all had a role to play in getting Prophet Yūsuf to that beautiful ending.

God implements His plan over a long-time frame. If you are in your youth, or even in the middle of your life, and you feel like there are some challenges, never give up! This may be part of your story. It has to take its course, and it may take longer for some people than for others. In the story of Prophet Yūsuf, it took longer for his father. Prophet Ya'qūb was much older when he got his happy ending and Prophet Yūsuf got back to him. This gives us the hope that no matter where we are in our journey, we have to know that this is not yet the ending; God has plans for us. He works very delicately because he does not want to force anyone, rather he wants everything to happen through the decisions of people. Through all of this, he still manages to take care of us very beautifully.

Another important point is that God can even turn the harm that people cause us in our favour. The brothers of Prophet Yūsuf wanted to harm him to get him out of their way. However, God uses their actions to take Prophet Yūsuf to a higher position. Imagine you are writing this story. You have a very young boy living in a small village, and you are told that by the end of the story, this character has to be the governor of the grand civilisation of Egypt. It seems an impossible task.

If he had lived peacefully with his family and father, it may have never happened. Instead, his brothers wanted to harm him, and so threw him into the well, but God made this work in Prophet Yūsuf's favour. It is important for us to remember that once we accept God's help and plan, then no one can harm us. Even if they plot against us, God will use their own actions to work in our favour.

The Pharaoh's Magicians

Imam Husayn (a) mentions the magicians of the Pharaoh as another example of God's planning. The magicians of the Pharaoh did not believe in God or in the prophethood of Prophet Mūsā. On the contrary, they even worked against Prophet Mūsā. It would be very difficult to find their equivalent in the present time. Of course, there are many people today who work against God, but there are no Prophets among us. The magicians even had a Prophet in their midst but worked against him.

They defied God: they challenged Him and His Prophet. But despite this, God loved them so much that He had a plan for them. He wanted them to find the truth, but He had to work slowly. God gave them the time and opportunity to experience whatever they wished. They wanted to explore magic, so God allowed them to become the best magicians.

You might ask why God allowed them to do all of this? You have to look to the end of the story to see God's planning. The answer is that they had to be the best magicians, so that

when Prophet Mūsā was sent to them with a Divine miracle, they would be able to distinguish it from acts of magic.

For ordinary people, it would have been difficult to distinguish between magic and the miracle of Prophet Mūsā. Maybe they would have doubted Prophet Mūsā. But magicians who had spent their life perfecting their craft knew for sure that what Prophet Mūsā did was a miracle. It could not be magic. There was no doubt for them, and so they believed. In a moment, they went from challenging God, to having a faith stronger than anyone else.

> فَأُلْقِىَ ٱلسَّحَرَةُ سُجَّدًا قَالُوٓا۟ ءَامَنَّا بِرَبِّ هَٰرُونَ وَمُوسَىٰ
>
> So, the sorcerers fell in prostration. They said, 'We have attained faith in the Lord of Hārūn and Mūsā.' (Qur'an 20:70)

Even after the Pharaoh threatened to harm them, they said:

> قَالُوا لَن نُّؤْثِرَكَ عَلَىٰ مَا جَآءَنَا مِنَ ٱلْبَيِّنَاتِ وَٱلَّذِى فَطَرَنَا فَٱقْضِ مَآ أَنتَ قَاضٍ إِنَّمَا تَقْضِى هَٰذِهِ ٱلْحَيَوٰةَ ٱلدُّنْيَا
>
> They said, 'By the One Who created us! We will never prefer you over the clear proofs that have come to us. So, do whatever you want! Your authority only covers the [fleeting] life of this world.' (Qur'an 20:72)

They reached a level of faith in God and the *ākhirah* such that the Pharaoh's threat had no impact on them. In one moment, they reached a level of spirituality that most people can only

dream of. Of course, this one moment was only as a result of God's long-term planning. If someone looked at the magicians of the Pharaoh before their encounter with Prophet Mūsā, they would have thought that these were the worst of people, and that there was no hope for their salvation.

But Imam Husayn (a) is teaching us to see things differently. He is teaching us to look at people the way God did. He did the same in Karbala. With the story of the magicians in mind, reflect back to the story of Ḥurr that we discussed earlier. Imam Husayn (a) treated him in the same way that God treated the magicians of Pharaoh. Even though Ḥurr had made so many mistakes, Imam did not give up on him, and just like the magicians, in one moment Ḥurr reached a level of faith that for many is only an aspiration. Every Muharram, people remember him and respect him for the level that he reached.

God's Planning for Us

God has plans for every single one of us: plans for taking care of us, getting us out of pain, and guiding us to the truth. Most of us only see our plan once our story has reached its conclusion. We look back and connect the dots, and are amazed at how much attention, care, and love was put into helping us reach the bliss at the end of our story. The sooner we recognise this, the easier our life will be and the easier it will be for us to surrender.

In the story of Prophet Yūsuf, even three quarters in, it is very difficult to see the happy ending. It needs training to see God's hand at work behind the scenes. The same is true of the story of the magicians. Almost till the end, it is very difficult to imagine how they could accept God and gain faith. It is only at the last moment, when the plan is completed, that everything suddenly makes sense.

We have to appreciate that the same is true of our own lives too. There may be things along the way that do not make sense: 'How is this going to help me?', 'How is this experience good for me?', 'How is this challenge going to benefit me?' Everything is part of the larger plan that God has for every single one of us; one day we will look back and everything wi make sense.

God is the best planner. He works in delicate and intricate ways in order to get the most amount of goodness to you. He wants to get you to a state where you are happy and feel unconditionally loved. Along the way, you may make mistakes. You may travel away from the destination and make your journey longer. Perhaps you are on the right way, but then someone hurts you and this knocks you off the path. Every time one of these things happens, God creates a new route for you. God keeps updating His plan for you.

A good way to understand how this works is to look at Google Maps. Imagine you wanted to travel from your house to the office, and Google Maps gives you a route. On your

way, you may make a wrong turn, or miss your exit. As soon as that happens, the app will automatically update the route for you. It will not give up on you. Google Maps will never tell you that because you have made a mistake, it will stop showing you the way. It will keep updating itself, until you get to your final destination.

God works in an even better way. Not only does He never tire of showing you the directions, but he also helps you make up for the time you have lost. With Google Maps, if you make a mistake, you will be shown a new route, but you have still lost some time going in the wrong direction. Maybe you have to make a U-turn, start again, and spend some extra time to get back to the route and finish your journey. Google Maps doesn't give up on you, but you may still have to spend twenty minutes just to get back to where you had initially started.

On the other hand, the beautiful thing about God's planning is that he has designed the world in a way that even when you make the U-turn, you will not lose any time. If you are genuine about your return, God will make up for the time you lost when you were going in the wrong direction.

Our Mistakes

At some point, we may decide to get on board with God's plan, but when we look back at our life and see all the years we did not follow Him, and we feel a sense of great loss, of years not benefited from, of great opportunities to get closer to Him squandered, and of happiness missed. However, God,

through His kindness, does not want us to be despondent, and so He turns our bad times into good times, so that we do not feel like we have fallen behind.

إِلَّا مَن تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَٰلِحًا فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ ٱللَّهُ سَيِّـَٔاتِهِمْ حَسَنَٰتٍ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا

> As for those who repent, believe, and do good deeds, God will change the evil deeds of such people into good ones. He is most forgiving, most merciful. (Qur'an 25:70)

After you decide to get on board with God's planning, He even makes up for all the time you wasted. It is so beautiful. God says He will turn all the bad things we did into goodness so that we do not feel that we have fallen behind. This is ho' much He loves us. This is how beautiful His planning is.

Never doubt that God can do this for you too. Some of us may look at our lives and at the years we have lost and think, 'How can God fix this?' No matter how big our mistakes are, they are never greater than God's mercy and power. Even if we run with full speed in the wrong direction, in one moment God can still bring us to the finishing line. Remember the magicians of Pharaoh. For the entirety of their lives, they went against God. But in one moment, God changed the game. Suddenly, by His grace, all the wrong they had done became an advantage for them. When Prophet Mūsā threw his cane onto the ground and it turned into a snake, everyone saw it, but it was the magicians who realised more than anyone else that this was from God. If God wills and if we decide to turn

towards Him, even our prior mistakes can become an advantage.

Our Wounds

You may now be convinced that God can help you make up for your mistakes, but you still may have another concern: that others have really hurt you. They have made life harder for you. Some of us may feel like others have taken away many years of our life. Imam Husayn (a) has an answer for this too. He reminds us of Prophet Yūsuf. His brothers threw him into a well. God turned that into a good thing and took him to a palace in Egypt. Zulaikha threw him into prison. God changed the plan again, and he became a vizier. When you are with God, no one can harm you. Even if they try, God will take you higher. God will use their plot against you and change it in your favour.

وَمَكَرُوا وَمَكَرَ ٱللَّهُ وَٱللَّهُ خَيْرُ ٱلْمَاكِرِينَ

> And they planned, and God planned. And God is the best of those who make plans. (Qur'an 3:54)

Once we realise God's love for us, and join him, we can rest assured that God will take care of us, no matter what:

مَّا يَفْتَحِ ٱللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِن رَّحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا

> No one can withhold the blessing God opens up for people. (Qur'an 35:2)

Once you appreciate this, you will start to see it in action all around you. I have seen many examples of it in my own life and the lives of those around me. There are people who have been betrayed by their friends or harmed by others, but once they were on board with God, He took care of them and not only made up for what they had lost, but gave them so much more than they could have ever imagined.

God's Love is not Just for Good People

Reading all of this, there may still be some who may find it difficult that God is so kind and noble. You may still struggle to accept that God loves us this much. You may still believe that this planning and attention is only for good people. (As if the magicians were good!)

Imam Husayn (a) knows that it is not easy for us to accept that we are loved. We have heard the opposite for so long that even when someone tells us that God is there for us, and that He has our back, something inside us stops us from being able to accept it, and we find it difficult to believe them. That's fine; it takes time. Imam Husayn (a) is very patient. He will keep telling us in different ways, until our heart accepts that God's help and planning is for everyone, not just the good people:

> يَا مَنْ قَلَّ لَهُ شُكْرِي فَلَمْ يَحْرِمْنِي وَعَظُمَتْ خَطِيئَتِي فَلَمْ يَفْضَحْنِي وَرَآنِي عَلَى ٱلْمَعَاصِي فَلَمْ يَشْهَرْنِي
>
> O He to Whom I was rarely thankful; yet, He did not deprive me, against Whom I

> committed grand sins; yet He did not expose me, and Who saw me insisting on disobeying Him; yet He did not disclose me.

'O God! I never showed any gratitude, or if I did, my gratitude was very small. I wasn't grateful for all of these plans You had for me, but that did not stop You from planning for me and helping me. I also made a lot of mistakes: I had sins, I had disobedience, but none of this stopped Your plan for me'.

God wants to bring everyone back, but He does not want to force anyone. He wants them to choose it and wish for it as well. The sooner I see God's love for me and choose to put my trust in His plan, the earlier I will be at ease in my life. Unfortunately, it takes many of us a long time to start seeing God's hand in our lives and beginning to trust him. We spend many years thinking that we are on our own, and that we have to take care of ourselves. We may get scared or jealous. We may do the wrong things to get closer to something we want. We may end up hurting others. In the next chapter we will read how God treats us during these years; you will see He is loving towards us all along, even when we ignore Him.

Let's end this chapter with a message that God asked Prophet Dāwūd to bring to us:

> يا داودُ، لَو يَعلَمُ المُدبِرونَ عَنّي كَيفَ انتِظاري لَهُم ورِفقي بِهِم وشَوقي إلى تَركِ مَعاصيهِم لَماتوا شَوقا إلَيَّ، وتَقَطَّعَت أوصالُهُم مِن مَحَبَّتي، يا داودُ، هذِهِ إرادَتي فِي المُدبِرينَ عَنّي، فَكَيفَ إرادَتي فِي

المُقبلِينَ عَلَيَّ؟! وارحَمُ ما أكونُ بِعَبدي إذا أدبرَ عَنّي، وأجَلُّ مايَكونُ عَبدي إذا رَجَعَ إلَيَّ

> O Dāwūd, if the ones who have turned away from Me knew how much I am awaiting their return, how kind I am towards them, and how much I am waiting for them to let go of those actions that hurt them, their bodies would not contain the joy and love they would feel for Me. This is how much I love those who turn away from Me; imagine then the love I show to those who come towards Me. Oh Dāwūd, the time I show the most mercy and love to My servants is when they turn away from Me, and the time I honour and respect them the most is when they come back to Me. [1]

God says that He loves us so much, even when we turn ou backs on Him. He says that if we felt His love for us, we would have fallen so in love with Him that we would be unable to contain our joy. God does not exaggerate. So, I invite you all to take a moment to put down this book, close your eyes, and tell God, 'We want to come back to you. Help us to feel your love!'

Chapter Summary

In this part of the du'a we learnt to look at life like Imam Husayn (a) and see the delicate and beautiful way God plans for every single person. First, we looked at the life of Prophet

---

[1] Fayḍ Kāshānī, Muhammad, *Mḥajjah al-Bayḍā'*, vol. 8, p. 62.

Yūsuf. We saw how all the events in his life came together to get him to the end of his story, where he was reunited with his family and became a governor in Egypt. In this story, we learnt that even when people try to harm us, God can use their own actions in our favour. The brothers of Prophet Yūsuf tried to get rid of him, but God used their actions to take Prophet Yūsuf to Egypt. In Egypt, people tried to harm him and had him sent to prison. Again, God changed the plot and used their actions to give Prophet Yūsuf the high position of governor.

The second story we looked at was the magicians of the Pharaoh, who spent their whole lives challenging God and working against His Prophet. God planned their story in a way that all those years spent going away from God eventually brought them closer towards Him. When they saw the miracle performed by Prophet Mūsā, they knew it could not be magic, and so they immediately professed faith. In this story, we learnt that even if we have made mistakes in the past and have gone against God, it is very easy for Him to bring us back.

We also learnt that sometimes we need time in order to see the beautiful plan that God has for us. We may still be in the beginning chapters of our story, and so we doubt it will ever be good. The sooner we trust God's plan, the sooner we will be at ease. God loves us, and nothing can stop Him from taking care of us, even our mistakes. God has a beautiful plan for us.

Chapter Ten

God's Love Never Stops

We are often told that God's love is only for those who do good and that as soon as we make a mistake, we will find ourselves outside the circle of His love. In this chapter, we will see how Imam Husayn (a) shows through his beautiful words that this could not be farther from the truth.

One of the mistakes we make is believing that we should have hope in God's mercy when we are good, and that we should fear Him when we make mistakes. Imam Husayn (a) corrects this misconception:

> إِلٰهى إِنَّ رَجائى لايَنقَطِعُ عَنكَ وَ إِنْ عَصَيْتُكَ كَما أَنَّ خَوفِى لايُزايِلُنِى وَ إِنْ أَطَعْتُكَ
>
> O my God, verily my hope in You does not cease even if I may disobey You. Similarly, my fear does not leave me even if I obey You.

Imam says that our hope in God's mercy is irrespective of our actions. We should have hope in God's mercy because He is merciful. He will remain merciful even when we make mistakes. Imam says that we can reach a place where we love God and enjoy His company so much that we are worried to lose Him, like two people in love who are always careful not

to hurt each other. They do this not because they are scared of one another, but because they are scared of losing one another. We should never fear God, the fear should be from losing Him.

Imam Husayn (a) says:

> يَا مَنْ لاَ تَضُرُّهُ ذُنُوبُ عِبَادِهِ وَهُوَ ٱلْغَنِيُّ عَنْ طَاعَتِهِمْ
>
> O He Who is not harmed by the sins of His servants, and Who can surely do without their obedience.

Imam says that our mistakes and sins do not harm God even a little, and that He does not need our worship. This is important to appreciate in order to properly understand our relationship with God. Imam tells us that whatever God does for us is out of His love. Unfortunately, many of us have learnt a version of religion that teaches the exact opposite. For example, many say, 'God has done so much for you and so you have to thank him or perform *ṣalāh* in return.' What they fail to realise is that God does not need our *ṣalāh* or our gratitude. If God has told us to be *shākir*, it is because through this *shukr* we ourselves benefit: life becomes easier for us.

Imam Husayn (a) is making it clear that every single thing in religion is for our benefit. If it does not feel that way, then it means we have not been taught the correct way of doing it. If we feel that we are doing it for God's benefit, it means we need to revisit our whole understanding of religion. Let's read

the next phrase of the du'a and reflect on the function of religion:

أَسْعِدْنِي بِتَقْوَاكَ، وَلَا تُشْقِنِي بِمَعْصِيَتِكَ

> Make me happy, fortunate, and prosperous through having *taqwā* of you. And do not let me have an unfortunate life through disobeying you.

According to Imam Husayn (a), we are the ones benefiting from *taqwā*[1] in our relationship with God. To help us understand this, think of our relationship vis-à-vis the sun. The sun does not need us; rather, we are the ones who need its light and warmth. If I went to my room, shut the curtains and deprived myself from sunlight, no harm would be done to the sun. The only effect would be that I lose out. God is like this. He has so much to offer to us: love, knowledge power, beauty, and more. If we do not try to remember Him, we are depriving ourselves. And it is out of His love that He keeps trying to remind us to be with Him, because He wants us to benefit from all that He can offer us.

We really need to appreciate this paradigm shift. None of the worship we do is for God. Every single religious obligation or prohibition is for us: not just for our hereafter, but also for our life in this world. Every religious act is to make our lives more pleasant.

---

[1] Later in this chapter, we will talk about the meaning of *taqwā*.

Therefore, if we have been performing *salāh* and fasting for many years and still do not feel any change, it means there is probably something wrong in the way we were taught. We need to work on it until we find the right way. But unfortunately, many a time, we do not pay attention to the outcome of our actions. For example, many may read Du'a 'Arafah without expecting to understand it. But now, after spending some time better understanding the du'a, I hope we can see how much beauty is contained within it. Is it not a totally different experience when you read a du'a and try to understand it, as opposed to when you read it just because you think you have to? Religion is there to help us and to make our life better. If it feels like a burden, we need to learn it again.

It is as if Imam is saying, 'God does not need you; He has done all of this out of love for you. Even when you make mistakes, it does not harm Him. In fact, the only thing that upsets God is that you are harming yourself. He is upset and worried about you. Is it not a great source of joy that you are dealing with such a loving God?'

This is a very important distinction. Religion, when understood correctly, feels like oxygen, water, and love: the things we cannot, and do not want to, live without. It is not a burden to carry, but rather the greatest joy. Imam Husayn (a) is telling us that having *taqwā* of God should lead us to a better life; we should feel fortunate.

What is Taqwā?

Taqwā is sometimes wrongly translated as being 'God-fearing'. Some translate it as being 'God-conscious'. Literally, it means to protect and keep. Allow me to explain this more practically with an example. After reading the beautiful lines of Du'a 'Arafah and understanding how much God loves you, you may begin to feel more positive towards Him internally. After reading the chapter on God's planning, you may feel His presence in your life to a greater degree. *Taqwā* is to protect these precious feelings, to try to live in a way such that you gain more of these feelings. The root of the word *taqwā* is to look after, so look after your relationship with God and keep Him present in your every moment.

There is so much that we have misunderstood about God sincerely ask you to open your heart and let the correc understanding of God enter, because it has the power to change your life. The joy of religion starts when we know God, and appreciate how Loving and Merciful He is. As Imam Ali (a) says:

أوَّلُ الدِّينِ مَعْرِفَتُه

> The foremost [point] in religion is knowing Him.[1]

No one does a better job of introducing God to us than Imam Husayn (a). One of the main problems we have is that those

[1] Sharīf al-Raḍī, Muhammad, *Nahj al-Balāghah (li Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ)*, p. 39.

who taught us about God had such a limited understanding of Him that what they presented to us was not loveable. It did not excite us. It did not make us want to run to God. It made us scared of Him. To appreciate God correctly, we need to learn from His closest chosen ones, people like Imam Husayn (a). God says in the Qur'an:

سُبْحَانَ ٱللَّهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ إِلَّا عِبَادَ ٱللَّهِ ٱلْمُخْلَصِينَ

> God is far above what they attribute to Him, except for God's sincere chosen servants. (Qur'an 37:159-160)

Let us continue reading the du'a to see how Imam Husayn (a) describes God and His mercy.

There is no Ending to God's Goodness

According to Imam Husayn (a), nothing stops God from giving us goodness:

يَا ذَا الْمَعْرُوفِ الَّذِى لاَيَنقَطِعُ أَبَداً

O the One whose kindness never stops.

Nothing, not even our shortcomings, can interrupt or pause God's mercy and goodness. This is beautiful!

God is Gentle, Merciful and Kind

Imam says:

إِلٰهِى مَا أَلْطَفَكَ بِى مَعَ عَظِيمِ جَهْلِى

> O my God, how gentle You are to me despite the magnitude of my ignorance.

In coming to this world, we have forgotten our origin, as well as so much more. There is so much we do not know about the realities of the world. It as if Imam says to God, 'How kind You are towards me even though I have all of this ignorance. I do not know where I have come from, I do not know my reality. I have forgotten that I am a soul, and think instead that I am limited to a physical body. In my ignorance, I spend all of my time taking care of my physical needs, forgetting that I have a soul. I do not see you in the world. I have misunderstood you. Despite all of this, You are so kind and gentle to me.'

At this point, you might wonder that even if our ignorance does not stop God from loving us, what if we act upon that ignorance? Will our bad actions ever stop God from being gentle and kind to us? Imam Husayn (a) answers that question in the next phrase of the du'a:

مَا أَرْحَمَكَ بِي مَعَ قَبِيحِ فِعْلِي

> How Merciful You are to me, despite my hideous deeds.

We make so many mistakes, and have so many unpleasant habits. Sometimes, we do things which we are ashamed of ourselves, but despite this, God is still full of mercy.

وَمَا أَرْأَفَكَ بِي

How kind You are to me…

Not just merciful, but also gentle, and kind, despite our ignorance and bad actions. This is God as described by Imam Husayn (a).

God Covers for Us

عُصِيَ فَسَتَرَ

[God] is disobeyed, yet He covers.

We all make mistakes in our lives. Sometimes, we make mistakes which even our family members might judge us for or stop loving us because of. Imam Husayn (a) says that God has seen all of these mistakes, but He loves us so much that He hides them from others, so that we do not become embarrassed and ashamed in front of them. Not only do our mistakes not stop Him from loving us, but he also covers them up for us so that we get a second chance to fix ourselves and become a better person.

If we disobey anyone else, they become upset. We may feel like we have to cover up our errors, so they do not find out. When we disobey God, He Himself is the one who covers it up. Is God not so beautiful? He knows our potential. He looks past our mistakes and shortcomings and sees us for the beautiful soul that we are: a soul that He created out of love. He does not give up on us. He wants us to have the chance to correct our mistakes, heal, and grow. When we make a mistake that is only between us and God, He asks us not to tell others about it. He cares for our dignity and does not want

our station to be lowered in front of others. That is how much He loves us: much more than we love ourselves.

God Does not Rush Us

Another quality of God's love is its patience:

وَوَسِعَ الْمُسْتَقِيلِينَ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَحِلْماً

> And embraces those who want to quit (their sins) with tenderness, love, and patience.

God is patient with us. Imam says that God surrounds (*wasi'a*) the one who make mistakes with three qualities: tenderness (*ra'fah*), mercy and love (*raḥmah*) and patience (*ḥilm*). There is so much to say about each of these qualities but let's focus on *ḥilm*. God's love is not in a hurry; it is not rushed. Many people want the best for us, but they are not patient with us. They are not patient enough to let us take our time to heal. They want us to change quickly, and when that change takes time, they get frustrated and give up on us. Conversely, God allows us to take our time.

When others find out about our shortcomings or bad qualities, they expect us to quickly fix them: just repent and move on. Of course, it would be great if it were that easy. But sometimes, growth and healing take time. Others may rush us to heal. They may rush us to feel better. Sometimes, when we are low, people may try to make us feel better quickly, without realising that we may need more time. God does not want to rush us, even in our healing. He surrounds us with tenderness and love, and allows us to heal at our own pace.

God tells us that even though we are making mistakes, He is there for us. We should not be scared; whenever we are ready, He will help us heal. This is very beautiful; God knows that the reason the soul is making these mistakes is that it has forgotten its origin. It has forgotten who it is, and in order to remember it needs time and love.

Imam continues with reminders of all that God does for us:

> إِلٰهِي وَصَفْتَ نَفْسَكَ بِاللُّطْفِ وَٱلرَّأْفَةِ لِي قَبْلَ وُجُودِ ضَعْفِي افَتَمْنَعُنِي مِنْهُمَا بَعْدَ وُجُودِ ضَعْفِي؟
>
> O my God, You had ascribed to Yourself gentleness and kindness towards me, before the existence of my weakness. Will You deprive me of these two after the emergence of my weakness?

It as if Imam is saying, 'O God, before I had this weakness, before all of my shortcomings, you were Kind and Loving, but now I have come to this world and become separated from You. As a result of this separation I am weak, I make mistakes, but does this mean that You are going to stop Your love and mercy towards me? No, in fact, You are going to show me more love. If You were showing love to me before I came to this world, and before I had all of these weaknesses, now that I am weak, I need ever more love!'

This is Imam Husayn's God. He is introducing God to us through these rhetorical questions. God is so beautiful and loveable. If we do not love Him, it is only because we have

been given the wrong understanding of Him. There is a beautiful hadith in which Imam Hasan (a) says:

مَنْ عَرَفَ اللهَ أَحَبَّه

Whoever knows God will love Him.[1]

Imam Husayn's God vs. Our God

These ideas may be difficult for many of us to accept after all that we have previously heard in religious circles. How can God be so loving towards us when we make mistakes? We are told that if we make mistakes God will stop loving us, or that God must punish us, because He is Just. Of course, God is Just, and actions have consequences. However, this is fa from the whole picture. Many of those who say these things have not really considered the implication of this belief. If God really was to judge us with His justice, no one would remain on the face of this earth. He says in the Qur'an:

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ ٱللَّهُ ٱلنَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوا مَا تَرَكَ عَلَىٰ ظَهْرِهَا مِن دَآبَّةٍ

> And if God were to hold mankind accountable for what they have committed, there would not be a single creature left on the surface of the earth. (Qur'an 35:45)

Love vs Justice

It is very important for us to realise that if God wanted to treat us solely with justice, we would be in a very difficult position, because of all the mistakes we make. When I say

---

[1] Warrām Ibn Abī Farās, *Majmū'ah Warrām,* vol. 1, p. 52.

mistakes, do not think of great sins. Sometimes even the smallest words we say can break a heart. For example, a person may suffer from a lack of self-esteem or constantly doubt themselves, because when they were a child, someone said words which were discouraging. This person may have said a harmful or harsh word many years ago and forgotten about it, not knowing how much it crushed someone else's heart. If the world was just, and we were destined to see the outcome of all the hearts that we have broken, nothing would be left of us. Every time we shouted at our parents, were grumpy with our children, or broke a partner's heart, the consequences would have been enough to doom us.

The following is an excerpt from *Biḥār al-Anwār*, where Allamah Majlisī mentions two hadiths on the importance of the heart of a believer; imagine then the consequences of breaking that heart!

> روي أن قلب المؤمن عرش الرحمن وروي أيضا في الحديث القدسي لم يسعني سمائي ولا أرضي ووسعني قلب عبدي المؤمن
>
> It has been narrated that the heart of the believer is the throne of God. And also, it has been narrated in a hadith al-Qudsi [that God said,] 'Neither my heaven nor my earth could contain Me, but it is the heart of My believing servant that can contain Me.'[1]

---

[1] Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 55, p. 29.

We have to know that God stops the consequences of a lot of the mistakes that we make from reaching us; every heart we have hurt, every time we have broken a promise, every time we have not taken care of ourselves: if the outcome of our actions hit us, we would be destroyed.

Once, we realise this, then it becomes clear that we need more than God's justice; we need His mercy and love to reach salvation. As He says in the Qur'an:

> وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ ٱللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُۥ مَا زَكَىٰ مِنكُم مِّنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا
>
> Had it not been for God's grace and mercy upon you, none of you would ever have been purified. (Qur'an 24:21)

It's also important that we are not too hasty to demand justice from others. If someone in our family makes a mistake, we are often very quick to demand they face justice. Believe me, this justice, if applied to everyone, would not be good for us. The hearts we have broken, the time of others we have wasted, the promises we have not kept, the people we have ignored, how harsh we have been, the things we may not have even noticed: seeing the consequences of everything we do would not be good for us!

There are those whom we have hurt; we should try our best to make it up to them. There are also many whom we may have hurt but whom we cannot now make it up to. Maybe we don't know where they live, or perhaps they have passed away. Maybe we have harmed them in a way that cannot be

compensated, even if we apologise. In all of these cases, we expect their mercy more than their justice. We have to rely on God to give them blessings to the extent that they forgive us. We have to pray that God treats them like Prophet Yūsuf, who was harmed by his brothers, but God managed to turn his life around. Eventually, the brothers regretted their actions and Prophet Yūsuf forgave them.

As you can see, we do not need justice. We need something more than that: we need mercy. This is exactly what God gives. He does not stop loving us after our mistakes. He gives us a second chance, and a third, until we find our way and improve. When we do make a mistake and sincerely regret it, He helps us to heal and make up for it.

God's planning is subtle, beyond our imagination and designed in a way that it always has our benefit at its centre.

When we hurt someone, God is there for them, with a plan to help them overcome the pain. He also has a plan for us, to help us outgrow our bad habits of breaking hearts and to help us change ourselves. This way, God saves our soul and prevents us from repeating the same mistake. God takes care of both sides in ways that are so beyond our imagination.

Let's reflect on another example from the life of Prophet Yūsuf: Zulaikha's actions against him, which led to him being sent to prison despite his innocence. Again, God flipped the script and planned for Prophet Yūsuf in such a way that this seemingly bad thing turned out to be good for him, and he

left prison to eventually become governor. However, God didn't only take care of him. He also took care of Zulaikhā, Pūtīfār's wife. God knew that she had made a terrible mistake, but He didn't want her to suffer, so Zulaikhā too goes through God's plan of rehab. By the end of it, she finds God's love and is completely transformed.

Imam Husayn (a) says:

يَا مَنْ اَيَادِيهِ عِنْدِي لاَ تُحْصَىٰ وَنِعَمُهُ لاَ تُجَازَىٰ

O He Whose favours to me are innumerable
and Whose bounties cannot be compensated!

Imam Husayn (a) says that the number of ways in which God enters our life to help us and lessen our suffering are so numerous that they cannot even be counted. We mentioned the story of Prophet Yūsuf, but the same is true in our own lives. God is with us at every moment to help us in our decision making. Even if we defy Him, He is still there to help us find our way back. He turns our mistakes into lessons and weaves a beautiful story for us: all we need to do is just talk to Him and ask for help.

Earlier in this book, we discussed the story of a friend of mine who kept feeling that a certain relationship was bad for him, but yet insisted on continuing with it. God inspired his heart because He had a plan for him, but despite this, he did not listen. Instead he said, 'No, I want to proceed with this relationship, no matter what.' He soon realised how bad it was for him, but at this point, God did not say, 'Told you so! This

is what you chose, so now suffer the consequences!' No, God is loving. God says, 'OK, I did not want you to do this, but now that you have, let me see how I can make it turn out well for you.' So yes, the relationship ended and there was a little bit of pain, but God planned in such a way that through this pain, both my friend and his partner learnt valuable lessons that helped them in their future relationships. He never stops planning for us, and He always has our best interests at heart.

Even when you defy Him with your mistakes, God tries to teach you a lesson, so that you do not make the same mistakes next time. Let's read the next phrase from the du'a:

> يَا مَنْ عَارَضَنِي بِٱلْخَيْرِ وَٱلإِحْسَانِ وَعَارَضْتُهُ بِٱلإِسَاءَةِ وَٱلْعِصْيَانِ
>
> O He Who receives me with a goodness and kindness, but [yet] I meet Him with offence and disobedience!

God never stops helping us. What He wants is to bring us closer to Himself, to goodness and to what is good for us. We will see all of this by the time that our story is over, just as Prophet Yūsuf did. We will look back, and all the events in our life will make sense. We will see all the different ways in which God helped. Imam says:

> يَا مَنْ هَدَانِي لِلإِيمَانِ مِنْ قَبْلِ انْ اعْرِفَ شُكْرَ ٱلاِمْتِنَانِ
>
> O He Who had guided me to faith before I learnt [to show] gratitude!

This is the case for many of us: God started guiding, helping, and planning for us before we were aware enough to see and appreciate it. Many of us even resisted His help. Yet, that did not stop God from helping us and showing us the way.

لَمْ يَمْنَعكَ جَهْلِي وَجُرْأَتِي عَلَيْكَ أَنْ دَلَلْتَنِي إِلَىٰ مَا يُقَرِّبُنِي إِلَيْكَ

> My ignorance of You and the fact that I challenged you have not stopped You from showing me that which takes me near to You.

Imam says that none of our mistakes will stop God from loving us and wanting us to be close to Him. Even our ignorance of God, or challenging Him, does not stop Him.

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ

> Indeed, God never wrongs [anyone] even by an atom's weight. (Qur'an 4:40)

God will never, at any point, do anything which is not in your very best interests.

As you can see, the reality of God is very different to what many of us have been taught. The God we picture in our minds gets angry and stops loving us. But Imam Husayn (a) tells us that in actuality, God never stops loving us and giving to us, and as the Qur'an says, He will never wrong us:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ ٱلنَّاسَ شَيْئاً وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱلنَّاسَ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

> Indeed, God does not wrong people in the least, but it is people who wrong themselves. (Qur'an 10:44)

The sooner we accept God's love and our shortcomings, the faster God's beautiful plan for us will come to fruition.

How to Help

We said this God's plan is to help us get to our destination quickly, but as a result of our mistakes or shortcomings, we keep making the journey longer. At this point someone may say, 'Wow, I want to stop making mistakes. I want to support God's planning and get through this journey very quickly; what should I do?'

It's not like we haven't tried to become a better person. Our whole life, we've tried to improve, but we still get angry all the time. We still shout at people every now and then. We still make promises on the nights of Qadr and then fail to keep them. We have bad habits we cannot eliminate. There are goals we want to achieve, but yet we fail. There are those we want to forgive but yet we find it hard to do so. There are difficulties we struggle to accept. There are moments in which we cannot be patient. Imam Husayn (a) voices our frustrations in this phrase of the du'a when he says:

> أَنَا الَّذِى أَسَأْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى أَخطَأْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى هَمَمْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى جَهِلْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى غَفَلْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى سَهَوْتُ
>
> It is I who did badly. It is I who did wrong. It is I who had evil intentions. It is I who acted impolitely. It is I who was careless. It is I who was inattentive.

I want to be a better person: to rely on God and surrender to Him, but it is difficult. I make a promise, I am good for one day, but then I slip up again. Imam says:

أَنَا الَّذِى وَعَدْتُ وَأَنَا الَّذِى أَخْلَفْتُ

> It is I who promised, and it is I who failed to keep it.

Sometimes, I vow that from tomorrow, I will be a good person: I will not break hearts, I will not backbite, I will be kind, I will not become angry. The very next day, I break my promise. I do not want to break my promise, but it happens. Sometimes, I stick to my resolutions for a few months but then again, I fail. Imam notes that all of our actions and good resolutions seem to keep failing us.

Many of us were taught that there were rules to follow or actions to perform in order to make us 'good'. We tried them all, but they didn't help us much. We're not in a great place. We still get really scared, angry, jealous, or anxious. We still sometimes break the hearts of others, even the hearts of those we love. At this point, after having tried everything, we feel like asking God:

فَبِأَيِّ شَىْءٍ أَسْتَقْبِلُكَ يَا مَوْلاىَ

What can I use to come towards you?

My actions? But my actions are incomplete and imperfect. We pray, yes, but our minds are elsewhere.

وَالْمُوَفِّقُ مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحاً مِنْهُمْ بِمَعُونَتِهِ وَرَحْمَتِهِ

And Who inspires those of them to do good,
out of His aid and mercy.

Imam Husayn (a) looks at the reality of the world and sees that every good action he did was with God's help. Whether it be avoiding mistakes, developing good qualities or performing good deeds, if we look back carefully, we realize that it was God who helped us throughout. He was there pushing us. We could not see His hand because it was hidden behind the scenes. Whenever we were nice to others, it was only through God's help. If we actually knew how to do it on our own, then why do we find it so hard to be nice? Why do we sometimes lose our temper? These moments show us that left to our own devices, we may even end up hurting those closest to us.

So, what can we use to go towards God and feel His love? Some of the spiritual teachers have theorised that there is so much emphasis on becoming good so that we try and see that it is impossible on our own. We keep trying to purify ourselves and improve yet we keep failing, until one day, we return back to God in desperation and say, 'God, only you can heal me. You take me towards Yourself. You heal my anger and my jealousy. Fill my heart with love so that there is no room for blockages or traumas. Heal me with Your love!'

Imam says that this decision to get on board with God's planning is the best thing we can do, the only option we have.

Go to Him! If He has been planning, and taking care of us even when we were not co-operating, what happens if we do co-operate? Imam Kāẓim (a) echoes this in a beautiful du'a:

> و قد علمت ان أفضل زاد الراحل إليک عزم إرادة يختارک بها
>
> And I have come to realise that the best provision of the wayfarer towards You is the firm decision by which they choose you.

The best thing we can do is to make an inner decision to choose God and accept His love for us. Instead of trying to take care of ourselves and reach our destiny alone, we ask God to take us on the journey. Then He is with us from the beginning to the very end. Imam Sajjad (a) elaborates on this point so beautifully:

> ما أَضْيَقَ الطُّرُقَ عَلى مَنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ دَليلَهُ، وَما أَوْضَحَ الْحَقَّ عِنْدَ مَنْ هَدَيْتَهُ سَبيلَهُ
>
> [God], how narrow are the paths for the one who goes on their journey without You as a guide? And how clear is the truth for the one who is taken forward on their path by You?[1]

Once we are on board with God's plan and trust Him, everything becomes much easier. All we need to do is to tell Him that we want His help. God does not want to force us in any way. He respects us so much that he wants us to decide to allow His special help into our lives. Of course, even prior to that, He has tried to help so much in a general sense. He

---

[1] Munājāt al-Murīdīn

sent Prophets to tell us how much He loves us. He sent revelations to our hearts. He used people, books, and messages to inspire us. But God's most powerful help comes from inside our hearts, and for that He waits for our permission. He is waiting for us to tell Him that we want Him to attend to our heart and heal it.

As soon as you say, 'God I choose You; I choose Your plan', from that moment onwards your life changes, because you have given permission to God to begin His healing work. Despite all His greatness, God was waiting for your permission. Suddenly, without realising, you will see yourself as a different person. From the moment you wholeheartedly allow God in, so many miracles will occur in your life. This is the most important secret of spirituality that Imam Husayn (a) teaches us. If there is one thing you take from this book, let it be this: choose God!

The Three Steps to Choosing God

In the next phrases of the du'a, Imam explains how we go about choosing God and allowing Him into our heart.

1. Desire to go towards God

وَرَغِبْتُ إِلَيْكَ فَرَحِمْتَنِي

I desired You and You showed love to me.

Imam says we should nurture the desire inside us that calls us towards God. If at any point you feel anything inside yourself calling you to this spiritual journey towards God, this is a very

precious gift. It is much more important than your prayer or your fasting. In fact, prayer, fasting, and all other good deeds are there to provoke this desire. Imam encourages us to cultivate this desire, appreciate it, and ask God to increase it.

2. Trust God

وَوَثِقْتُ بِكَ فَنَجَّيْتَنِي

I trusted You and You saved me.

Imam Husayn (a) tells us that God has plans for each one of us: He wants to take you to a good place. Trusting Him makes it easier for Him to plan for you. Sometimes, all we need to do is to let go of the need to be in control, close our eyes, and fall into the arms of God.

3. Seek protection with God

وَفَزِعْتُ إِلَيْكَ فَكَفَيْتَنِي

I ran to You for protection and You fully took care of me.

The third and last part of the formula is something which complements all the previous aspects. If our trust in God is not strong enough and we still feel scared, there is a solution. Imam says whenever you feel scared, return to God. Whenever you have worries, run to God. Whenever you are alone, go to Him. Whenever you fear pain, call Him. Whatever feelings or thoughts you have, share them with God, and ask Him to help you.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we learnt that understanding God is the first step in religion, and that according to the Imams (a), God is so beautiful that if we really knew Him, we would love Him. We learnt from Imam Husayn (a) that God's love is not dependant on our actions. He does not need our worship, nor is He hurt as a result of our disobedience. Whatever He tells us to do is for our own benefit, and if we think otherwise, we have misunderstood.

We discussed some of the qualities of God:

a) There is no pause to His goodness
b) His love is gentle, merciful and kind
c) He covers our mistakes and gives us second chances

We also learnt that God has a beautiful plan for us, and that the moment we trust Him and accept His help, everything becomes easier for us. The most powerful secret of the spiritual journey is choosing God and trusting His love. Instead of trying to take care of ourselves and attempting to reach our destiny alone, we need to ask God to take us on the journey. We can do this in three ways:

1) Desiring to go towards Him
2) Trusting Him
3) Seeking protection with Him

Chapter Eleven

Returning to God

According to Imam Husayn (a), in another realm and at the beginning of our story, we were all with God. Then, when the time was right, He brought us to this world and caused us to be born. As soon as we came to this world, we experienced a kind of separation from God. We opened our eyes in a new world and saw so many things around us, causing us to forget a lot about our origin. We do not remember where we came from, but we are looking for it in everything we do.

We had all tasted the sweetness of being with God, and missed it immensely, but because we did not know what it was, we began to search for it in this world. In every relationship, every job, and every item we bought, we were looking to replicate that sweetness and union we so badly missed. Every time we thought we might find it in a new relationship or job, we became excited and worked hard to achieve it, but when we did, we realised that as great as it might have been, it was not what we were looking for.

Some of us even gave up on the idea that what we wanted could ever be achieved, because despite all our efforts here on

the earth, it had not been possible. We had forgotten that what we actually wanted was to be reunited with our beloved. Imam Sajjād (a), in Munājāt al-Muḥibbīn, says that whoever yearned for something or looked for love in this world was actually looking for the love of God that they had once tasted:

يا مُنى قلوب المشتاقين ويا غاية آمال المحبين

> [God], O the wish of the hearts of all who yearn and the ultimate dream of all who are in love.

But our problem was that we thought we could find that source of love here, amongst the creation, not knowing that we actually had to go back to the Creator. Everyone on earth only has a share of the love, but the actual source and fountain is God Himself. Look at how beautifully Imam Husayn (a) expresses this:

إِلٰهى تَرَدُّدِى فِى الْآثارِ يُوجِبُ بُعدَ الْمَزارِ

> O my Lord, Your creations were signs to send me towards You, but my confusion among them delayed [my] meeting with [You].

Before coming to this world, we were so united with God that all we could see was Him. We came to this world of *Kathrah* (multiplicity) and we found ourselves amongst the many creations of God. They were meant to act as signs to guide us back to Him, but instead we were distracted by them. We wandered amongst creation to the extent that we forgot about the Source. Instead of finding our way back to our original home with God, we started building a home here, and

becoming used to this new place, far from Him. Deep down, we always knew there was something missing; that this world, as beautiful as it was, did not feel like home. We were created for a better life. As vast as this world is, it is like a prison for a soul which has once directly experienced God's love.

There is a reason that we came to this world. There are things that we can learn here that will enable us to benefit from God's love even more once we return to Him. If we had never felt this separation from God, we may always have felt it was better to live independently of Him. We came to this world to see for ourselves what it feels like to live independently of God. We came to see what it feels like to take care of ourselves alone. The spiritual journey begins when the person who is on this earth admits that they do not want to be independent of God. They realise that God does a better job of taking care of them than they ever could, so they surrender to Him. The beauty of this surrender and the realisation of God's love for us can only happen in this world.

Another reason why coming to this world will benefit us once we go back is that there are so many things that we would not have experienced if we had never come here, such as loving others or helping them. That beautiful sense of peace we get when we show love to others can only happen in this world. God is the only source of love. However, God wanted us to get a taste of loving and giving too, and so He put us here, gave us from His own love and let us think that it belonged to us, so that we could also get a taste of loving others. To

explain this further, imagine parents who want their child to learn the beauty of sharing, and so buy a gift for their child to give to her friend. The child does not have money to buy a gift for her friend herself, so they buy it for her and give it to her, so she gets to experience gifting herself. This is our story on earth. God gave us knowledge, power, and love so we get to do good and experience giving love.

However, we were not meant to stay here for ever. We came to experience, learn and grow before we find our way back again. We were one with God; we became separated; and once again we will be reunited. The Qur'an beautifully summarises the whole journey:

إنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنا إِلَيْهِ راجِعُونَ

> Surely, we belong to God and to Him do we indeed return. (Qur'an 2:156)

Our final destination is returning to our God and meeting Him. Earlier, we mentioned Imam Husayn's words to this effect:

وَأَنَّ إِلَيْكَ مَرَدِّى

And to You shall be my return.

There are many verses in the Qur'an that describe meeting God, as well as acknowledgments that some people might doubt that this will actually occur:

أَلَآ إِنَّهُمْ فِى مِرْيَةٍ مِّن لِّقَآءِ رَبِّهِمْ أَلَآ إِنَّهُۥ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ مُّحِيطٌ

> They are truly in doubt of the meeting with their Lord! Know that He is indeed surrounding everything. (Qur'an 41:54)

God, however, assures us that the meeting will definitely happen:

> مَن كَانَ يَرجُوا لِقَآءَ ٱللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ ٱللَّهِ لَآتٍ
>
> Whoever expects the meeting with God—the appointed time of God is sure to come. (Qur'an 29:5)

Going Home

What is the journey back to God like? At the moment, we are too immersed in this world to even think about another world or the fact that we were once united with God; these idea seem strange to us. For many of us, the most real thing seems to be the present separation from God. For as long as we can remember, we have been separated from Him. We have been so distracted that we may even doubt the possibility of meeting Him.

There are two ways of experiencing this world. In the first, which is how most of us experience it, we feel so separated from God that we may doubt His existence or His love or that we will return back to Him. We are not the first to feel this way:

> أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبَؤُا ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبلِكُمْ قَومِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَٱلَّذِينَ مِن بَعدِهِمْ ... قَالُوا ... وَإِنَّا لَفِى شَكٍّ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَنَآ إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ

> Have you not heard about those who went before you, the people of Nūḥ, ʻĀd, Thamūd, and those who lived after them … saying, '…We have doubts about what you call us towards.' (Qur'an 14:9)

The Qur'an tells us that we can become so distracted by this world that we start to doubt its loving Creator. But it does not have to be this way. There is another way of existing in this world. If we begin to choose God and remember His love for us, then gradually we begin to encounter God clearly, even living here. Then, not only would we not doubt God and His love, we would see it so clearly that we would be surprised that it could ever be doubted at all. The verse immediately after the one quoted above reads:

قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِي ٱللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ ٱلسَّمَاوَاتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ

> Their messengers said, 'Can there be doubt about God, Creator of the heavens and earth?' (Qur'an 14:10)

Their messengers said that it is possible to live in a way that would enable you to know God so clearly it would remove even the possibility of doubt. This is what we try to achieve through our spiritual journey: getting to a stage where we can experience the world with God.

There is a fascinating letter written by Imam Husayn (a) to Muhammad ibn Ḥanafīyah. Some believe he wrote it on the sixth of Muharram, whereas others say the exact date is unknown. Either way, it was written in Karbala, in the last few

days of Imam Husayn's life. The letter consists of only one line:

فَكَأَنَّ الدُّنْيا لَمْ تَكُنْ وَ كَانَّ الْآخِرَةَ لَمْ تَزَلْ

> It is as if this world never existed and the Hereafter never ceased to be.[1]

What does Imam mean? He reached a place in his spiritual journey that the world of separation faded as if it was never there, and the world of unity with God was so clear it was as though it had been there all along. Imam no longer felt separated from God. He felt like he had been with God all along. This is a profound letter. It shows us that Imam completed his spiritual journey whilst still in this world. He was reunited with God and did not have to wait till death before he could reach the other world. He is telling us tha the separation we feel from God right now is only an illusion. One day we will see, just as the Imam did, that we were in fact united with God all along: we were never separated. Right now, at this very moment, in whatever state we are in, God is here with us. Just take a moment, close your eyes, and remind yourself that God is with you right now!

---

[1] Ibn Qūlawayh, Ja'far, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, p. 76. The full text in Arabic is as follows:

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيم

مِنَ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيّ إِلَى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَلِيّ وَ مَنْ قِبَلَهُ مِنْ بَنِي هَاشِم

أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَكَأَنَّ الدُّنْيا لَمْ تَكُنْ وَ كَانَّ الْآخِرَةَ لَمْ تَزَلْ .وَ السَّلَامُ.

Imam is teaching us that as real as this world may seem, as solid as these walls appear, they are not the ultimate reality and we are not meant to remain here forever. All creation is only a sign directing us towards God. It does not have an independent role; there is a reality way above it.

> إِلٰهِى عَلِمْتُ بِاخْتِلافِ الْآثارِ وَتَنقُّلاتِ الْأَطْوارِ، أَنَّ مُرادَكَ مِنّي أَنْ تَتعرَّفَ إِلَيَّ فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ لا أَجْهَلَكَ فِي شَيْءٍ
>
> And I have realised, through the diversity of signs and the changes of phases, that what You want from me is to introduce Yourself to me in all things so that there is nothing through which I cannot discover you.

In order for us to remember that this world is temporary and not our home, Imam tells us that God has a plan. He has not simply brought us into this world and then left us. He keeps talking to us, showing us kindness and love and sending us reminders so that we may slowly awaken and realise that there is more to reality than this world. This is why the first level of spirituality is called wakefulness (*yaqẓah*).

Wakefulness

The first level of spirituality is reached the moment you wake up to the realisation that there must be more to life than just what we see in this world. Waking up every morning, going to work, earning money, coming home, eating, sleeping… Is this all there is? At some point in your life, you suddenly feel that there should be more. It is not something you can be

told; rather you must feel it inside. God will continue sending reminders through people, events in your life, books, and in various other ways until one of them hits home and your eyes open.

Being a Stranger to Our Own Selves

Prior to our wakefulnesss, not only we do not feel God, we also do not feel our own reality. If this physical world is all there is, then we must also be nothing more than a physical reality, a body. We forget about our soul, and its greatness that God blew from His own Spirit. Instead, we believe this body is our reality.

If we do not know who we are, we may identify with our body. If we then see someone else with a stronger or taller body, we may feel inferior to them. We start comparing ourselves to others through our bodies. We may feel unworthy or jealous. Why? Because we have forgotten that this body is not our reality. We are a beautiful soul created by God. The body is only a gift for us to experience this world. No one is better than another because of the qualities of their bodies. In fact, all bodies are perfect for the mission their soul has. If we do not even know that we are a soul, here on a mission, we may want to use our bodies in ways for which they were not designed. We then end up disliking our body, and because we think we are only the body, we dislike ourselves. These are the kinds of issues we may face before our wakefulness.

Your reality was unity with God; you are a soul that existed with God. When you think you are actually something else, your behaviour becomes peculiar. Imagine if despite being an adult, I genuinely believe that I am a toddler, and so I start acting like one. My behaviour would seem bizarre to others. In our case what has happened is that we are a soul, but we believe we are only a body and so we start acting like one.

Imam Husayn (a) says that whilst we are in this state of forgetfulness as to who we really are, God is very patient with us, and keeps sending us reminders to help us wake up. In fact, everything in our life is there to help us wake up. Every event in our life is a reminder that we have forgotten our true self. We identify our self with our body or our material wealth, and as a result, we feel small. For example, if someone hits your car and damages it, even though you yourself are not injured at all, you may still feel hurt. The car is damaged, but you are the one who feels pain, because in some way, you have identified with the car. This is life teaching you that you are not the car. You are bigger. You are worthier. If someone shouts at you, you get hurt. That is life teaching us that you are not your ego. You are bigger. Slowly, if you are open to the lessons that life teaches, you will be guided to a place where you realise your worth and see that nothing can hurt you. Every time you get hurt, it means that you have identified with something that was not you, because the real you is a beautiful soul created by God that no one can hurt. The magicians said this to the Pharaoh after he threatened to hurt them. They told him that he could do whatever he wanted to

their bodies, but that his hands would never reach them. They realised that they were beautiful souls, and no one could hurt them. Whenever people hurt others, what they actually are doing is creating a fire inside their own soul. They may hurt the other person physically, but they will see one day that the real damage was done to their own soul.

Finding our Way Back

When in our ignorance we make mistakes, God, in His love, patiently waits for us. Slowly, we begin to pay attention to the message He sends us. Slowly, we begin to wake up and feel His love inside. This is where the journey starts. At this stage, we are still in the world of separation, but we are seeing glimpses of God's presence and love. We realise there is another way of living in which we can better feel His presence.

إلهي مَا أقرَبَكَ مِنّي وَأبعَدَنِي عَنكَ

> O my God, how close You are to me and yet how far I feel from You!

God is close to us and this separation is an illusion, but what is causing it to persist?

فَمَا الَّذِي يَحجُبُنِي عَنكَ؟

> What is blocking me from fully experiencing You?

Imam Husayn (a) is teaching us that at this stage, the person realises that God has always been taking care of them, and so

they begin to ask why they could not feel it more. What is in us that blocks us from experiencing God's love more? We look around and see only walls and houses, trees and cars. God, where are You? Even in my prayer, I only see my prayer mat. I want You! Why am I not experiencing You?

God says in the Qur'an:

فَأَينَما تُولُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ الله

> Wherever you turn, it is [towards] the face of God. (Qur'an, 2:115)

So what, then, is stopping me from seeing You? You told me to look around myself to see You; I am looking around, but I still cannot see You, even though I know You are there.

All of these questions are part of the journey. Every time we ask these questions, we are strengthening our yearning for God. We are remembering that life should be more and that we need to be able to experience our God.

Someone once asked Imam Ali (a), 'Have you seen God?' Imam Ali (a) replied,

مَا كُنْتُ أَعْبُدُ رَبّاً لَمْ أَرَه

I do not worship a God I have not seen.[1]

Of course, this 'seeing' is not with the physical eyes, as Imam explains in the rest of the hadith. But it is very important for

[1] Kulayni, Muhammad ibn Yaqub, *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 98.

us to know that real worship begins once we have seen God. We should not think that this 'seeing' is limited to the Prophets and Infallibles. The Imam is teaching us that we too can achieve this. According to Imam Ali (a), worship begins with a Divine encounter, with experiencing God. This begs the question as to what encountering and experiencing God actually means.

Of course, it does not happen with our physical senses. It is a meeting between our soul and its Lord. It is difficult to articulate, just like 'love'. You cannot explain love to someone who has not tasted it. You can give them a description, but they will only understand it once they themselves fall in love and it takes over their whole heart. They cannot stop thinking about the beloved. All they want is to be with them. Love is the closest experience in this world to encountering God. We will discuss this further in the last chapter.

Ikhlāṣ is the Fruit of True Conviction

Encountering God is a beautiful tree with so many fruits, one of which is *ikhlās.* There is a beautiful phrase in the du'a:

وَالْيَقِينَ فِي قَلْبِي وَالإِخْلاصَ فِي عَمَلِي

> And [God give me] conviction in my heart and sincerity in my actions.

It is interesting to note that 'sincere action' (*ikhlāṣ*) comes after having 'conviction in (the) heart'. We can only be sincere in our actions when we have conviction: when our heart has

experienced God. As long as we do not see God behind everything, we cannot be completely sincere.

Our mind accepting that there is a God does not lead to conviction in our heart. The mind can memorise many things that it has not truly experienced. Imam asks for conviction to enter the heart, and for this, we need real encounters with God, real experiences of the Divine.

It is one thing to say *Allah-u Akbar* (God is the source of greatness) and another to have experienced it. If it is only a phrase on the tongue, it will not help when life gets challenging. But when it is a lived experience, it changes everything!

Once we see God's hand in everything, and realise that He is the source of all things, then it becomes easy to pray only to Him, to be sincere and do things only for Him because we see that there is no-one other than Him who has any power. At that stage, *ikhlāṣ* is the only possible option.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we discussed the journey that every human being goes on. Our origin and starting point were with God, and when we were united with all other people, and with our Creator, all was fine. However, in order to grow, we had to learn certain things, and in order to learn, we had to come to this world. As a result, we became separated, and this separation brought with it a lot of pain. We forgot our

connection with God and began to feel lonely. We started accepting this new temporary reality as the ultimate reality.

We identified with our body and felt small as a result. We forgot that we are a soul. We thought that we had to live independently of God, and take care of ourselves alone, and this was all too difficult.

Throughout the whole of Du'a 'Arafah, Imam is trying to wake us up. He began by telling us that we do not have to always be the one to take care of ourselves. We have a loving God who will never leave us to take care of us.

At some point, we start waking up to the realisation that there is more to this life. We begin to feel that perhaps we are more than our body. We start to get glimpses of God's love and presence. Slowly, some of the separation and loneliness we feel dissipates. As this happens, we begin to ask: If God is always there, then why do I not feel His presence all the time? What is blocking me from fully experiencing God and His love? These questions, if we take them seriously, will strengthen our yearning for God and become the key that unlocks the next stage for us.



Chapter Twelve

God Takes Us Home

In this chapter, we will discuss religious experiences: the moments in which we encounter God and feel His presence. These are the beautiful moments in which life makes sense and we feel connected. Let us read the next phrase of the du'a and learn more about this stage of the journey from Imam Husayn (a):

إِلٰهِي حَقِّقْنِي بِحَقَائِقِ أَهْلِ الْقُرْبِ

> O my God, (please do) grant me the realities that are enjoyed by the people who are near to You.

Imam says that when a person reaches a certain level, they start living a different reality. They may be amongst us, but they experience the world in an entirely different way. There are people living amongst us in this world who know they are a soul and not just a body, and who really feel their connection with God.

We might think that there is only one world, but it is possible to be in the same physical space but still be living in very different realities. At first, it might seem strange that people

could experience the world differently, with one group feeling God's presence and one group not, but there are many such examples, where the same thing is experienced differently by different people.

Imagine a restaurant full of people sitting at different tables. Each table is in a completely different state. At one table, there may be a couple who have just got engaged and who feel above the clouds. Next to them could be another couple who are so busy on their phones that they don't even notice one another. Perhaps at the next table, another couple are discussing their separation and divorce. In the opposite corner, there may be a family with children who are so young they do not even know what the word 'divorce' means. So many people in the same place, all having different experiences. This world is the same. We could all be living different realities. We may either feel separate from God and worry that we are on our own, or feel connected to and taken care of by Him.

One of our scholars narrates that when he was a child, his mother once took him to his favourite market. It was an old bazaar, full of colours and smells, with plenty of small, beautiful shops each selling different items. His mother told him something which he still remembers to this day. She said, 'Hasan, dear, hold on to mum's hand tightly. If you lose mum, this place that you love so much will become like a hell for you.' That same place that he loved to visit would become a

dark and scary place if he lost his mother, his source of comfort.

The same thing is said to us by God in the Qur'an:

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنكًا

> Whoever stops remembering Me will find life very difficult. (Qur'an 20:124)

God is telling us all that as long as we hold on to Him and feel Him by our side, we will feel fine. The moment we lose Him and feel alone, life becomes difficult and scary. Just like a loving mother, God is there to take care of us, and just like a mother, even if we lose God and let Him go, He does not simply give up: He will come to help us find Him.

Right now, the reason life is difficult for many of us is that we have lost God. We are in the market of this world, and a place that could be so beautiful with God has become like a hell for us without Him. We look around and all we see is God's creation (*āthār*) but we struggle to find God Himself. Imam Husayn (a) says that this can change; life can be experienced differently:

إلٰهي حَقِّقْني بِحَقائِقِ أَهْلِ الْقُرْبِ

> O my God, (please do) grant me the realities that are enjoyed by the people who are near to You.

Imam Husayn (a) says that when you are with God, you have a friend, even when times are difficult:

انتَ ٱلْمُؤْنِسُ لَهُم حَيْثُ اوْحَشَتهُمُ ٱلْعَوَالِمُ

> You are their intimate friend when the different realms make them feel lonely.

Whenever events transpire to make them feel lonely, or they are wracked with fear, God is there with them, like a close friend or a loving partner, taking care of them so that they do not suffer.

As long as we have not reached this stage, we are living in *ghiflah*, negligence. As long as we have accepted this body as who we are and the physical world as the entirety of reality, we are living in negligence. We are in a sort of dream that we have to wake up from.

We have forgotten ourselves. Do you know how much pleasure we will experience when we finally see our true selves again, realising that we are in fact a soul? The day we transcend this world of separation, we will also transcend all of our insecurities, worries, and scars. At some point, God will send the light into our hearts, the veils will disappear from our eyes, and we will finally see the reality of the world, find our true selves, and encounter our loving God.

God Initiates

Imam says two hugely important things as he continues. The first:

انتَ ٱلذَّاكِرُ قَبلَ ٱلذَّاكِرِينَ

> Oh God, You are the One who remembers us first.

So often we are told that we should remember God, be mindful of Him, or think about Him. Imam Husayn (a) says that it is actually God who is always mindful of us; He is the one who starts the relationship. This is not a one-sided relationship emanating from us. It is God who initiated this. In fact, it is because of God's attention that we have the opportunity to be mindful of Him and remember Him. Remembrance is from Him first.

Imam Husayn (a) then says:

وانتَ ٱلْبَادِئُ بِٱلإِحْسَانِ قَبلَ تَوجُّهِ ٱلْعَابِدِينَ

> You start showing compassion before the attention of the worshippers.

Before those who worship God even go towards Him, it is He who first shows attention and goodness to them. God gives us before we even begin to remember Him. It is through His mercy and help that we learn to remember Him.

وَأَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ثُمَّ لِما وَهَبْتَ لَنا مِنَ الْمُسْتَقرِضِينَ

> You do bestow upon us, and then borrow from us that which You have bestowed upon us.

This phrase is incredibly beautiful. Imam Husayn (a) is explaining another of God's incredible ways of showing love to us. Without God, we do not have anything. We do not have

the power to do anything. However, it is beautiful to be able to do good things and God wants this for us, so He gives us the power and the inspiration to do good. Once we do, He appreciates us, even though it was only possible through His support. We should know that the same is true of our whole spiritual journey. Of course, we try our best to embark on the journey of growth and God appreciates all our efforts, but ultimately, all of our efforts are only possible because of His help. He gives us the power to act. He helps us to remember Him. He helps us to want to be better.

Jadhb

There are different ways of going on this journey towards God. Imam Husayn (a) says the best and fastest is through *jadhb*.

وَاسْلُكْ بِي مَسْلَكَ أَهْلِ الْجَذْبِ

> And make me follow the course of the people
> who have received *jadhb* from You.

What is *jadhb*? *Jadhb* is a sudden, strong yearning or burning desire that God puts in our hearts. Suddenly, we feel so much yearning for God that we manage to detach from whatever is holding us back. This burning desire that God puts into our hearts is only a taste of what it feels like to return to God. It feels like a drop of water joining an ocean, a child returning to the loving embrace of his mother, a lover reuniting with their beloved after many years of separation or a person going

back home after many years of living in a strange land. *Jadhb* feels like all of this and more!

Imam Husayn (a) says this is the fastest way to go on the spiritual journey. Otherwise, it can take a long time to slowly let go of what we are so attached to and find our way back to God. But this *jadhb* is so strong that it makes everything easy, and if we do not have it now, that is fine. In the next phrase of the du'a, Imam Husayn (a) teaches us how to ask God for it:

وَاجْذِبْنِي بِمَنِّكَ حَتَّىٰ أُقْبِلَ عَلَيْكَ

> Draw me towards You through a burning desire, so that I will come to You.

Imam Husayn (a) knows the nature of human beings and how easily we get distracted. In the absence of a great love and desire to be with God, we will always get distracted and will thus be unable to complete the spiritual journey. Even if we continue to worship for years, the final stage, transcending the ego, will never happen without this burning love. But when this love is present, all distractions fade, and the only true beauty remains:

يا مَنْ أَذاقَ أَحِبّاءَهُ حَلاوَةَ الْمُؤانَسَةِ فَقامُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مُتَمَلِّقِينَ

> O He Who has given His lovers the taste of companionship which is so sweet it made them stand up to praise Him.

If the beauty of a lover, the colour of their eyes or the way their hair falls warrants our praise, then how will we feel when we meet God, the source of all beauty? The feeling is unimaginable. Every beautiful thing in this world that has won our praise has its source in God: He is the source of all beauty. The moment we meet Him, we can't help but stand in His praise. This is the moment we finally realise the true meaning of *al- Ḥamdu li Allah* (all praise belongs to God).

أَنْتَ الَّذِى أَشْرَقْتَ الْأَنْوارَ فِى قُلوبِ أَوْلِيائِكَ حَتَّىٰ عَرَفُوكَ وَوَحَّدُوكَ

> You are the One who has ignited the lights in the hearts of Your intimate friends so that they have come to know You and witness Your Oneness.

This phrase of the du'a likens the state of our life before encountering God to the darkness of night: everything is there but we cannot see. Then sun rises and with its light it enables us to see. The same is with God. Prior to our spiritual journey we are living in darkness and we cannot see Him. But when the light of God grows in our heart, it removes all darkness and we get to see the truth. We reach a place where everywhere we look, we see nothing but God.

أَيَكُونُ لِغَيْرِكَ مِنَ الظُّهُورِ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونَ هُوَ الْمُظْهِرَ لَكَ؟

> Does anything other than You have any brightness from itself to be able to show You?

In the previous stages of the journey, we were looking for a sign to take us towards Him. Now, we see that everything in this world gets its light and existence from God. God is the only bright reality in the world. How can anything else point to Him? He is akin to the sun, from whose light everything comes to be. Nothing else has any light to shine on God. At this stage, all the person sees when they look around is God.

This is a beautiful and fascinating shift in perspective. The person goes from, 'Why can't I see God?' to 'How could I ever not see Him?'

> مَتىٰ غِبْتَ حَتّىٰ تَحْتاجَ إِلىٰ دَليلٍ يَدُلُّ عَلَيْكَ؟ وَمَتىٰ بَعِدْتَ حَتّىٰ تَكُونَ الآثارُ هِيَ الَّتي تُوصِلُ إِلَيْكَ؟ عَمِيَتْ عَيْنٌ لا تَراكَ
>
> When have You ever been absent so that You may need something to point to You? When have You ever been far-off so that traces may lead to You? The eye that cannot see You is blind.

When we reach this stage, we finally realise that God had been with us every step of the way, but that we could not see Him. It is as if we were looking directly at God and not seeing Him. Finally, we understand the meaning of the verse:

> فَأَيْنَما تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللهِ
>
> Wherever you turn, it is the face of God. (Qur'an, 2:115)

It is at this point that we feel the presence of God in our life in a way that cannot be doubted. When recounting the story

of the Prophet's Mi'rāj, the Qur'an beautifully points out to the doubters that they cannot argue with him over a reality that he experienced:

أَفَتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ

> Are you going to dispute with him over what he saw? (Qur'an 53:12)

Any doubt about the experience and presence of God is removed. If before we could see others and not God, now God's presence is so strong that we cannot see others. The du'a says:

وَمَحَوْتَ الأَغْيارَ

> You have erased others [from my sight].

God's presence eradicated everything else. His light is so bright that everything else fades:

كَيْفَ تَخْفىٰ وَأَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ؟ أَمْ كَيْفَ تَغيبُ وَأَنْتَ الرَّقِيبُ الحَاضِرُ

> How can You be hidden whilst You are the Manifester [of all things]? Or how can You be absent whilst You are the Watcher [over all things] and the Present [at all times]?

God is so present. Right now, even though we may not feel Him, He is very much present. He is not an absent or abstract being somewhere high in the heavens. He is here. God can be found in your heart.

وَٱعْلَمُوا أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ ٱلْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ

> And be sure that God intervenes between a person and their heart. (Qur'an 8:24)

This is God according to Imam Husayn (a): a loving Being who is with you in your happy moments and there for you in times of pain. He has got your back. He respects you. He is patient. He forgives your mistakes and gives you second chances. He helps you to heal. He began loving you before you were even born, and never stopped. He does not need you, yet He remembers you more than you remember Him. He has a great plan for you, but He does not want to force it on you; He waits for you to say that you are ready for it.

You are surrounded by God and His love, and you can get to a place where you feel it:

أَلَا إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُحِيطٌ

> He is indeed surrounding everything. (Qur'an 41:54)

You can have a relationship with God. You can get to know Him and feel seen and heard by Him. You do not have to take care of yourself alone. Let God take care of you. Live your life with Him. If you want to grow, He can help you grow. If you want to go on a spiritual journey, He can take you. And if you want it all, then ask Him to give you His love. This is spirituality according to Imam Husayn (a).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we spoke about the final destination of the human journey: meeting with God. We learnt that the human journey has different stages. At first, we were with God. Then we came to this world and felt separated from Him. Finally, after having gained what we came here for, we have to find our way back to God.

We said that even the separation we feel in this world is not real, but rather an illusion. Even now, God is very present in our life and very close to us. The only problem is that we cannot feel His presence. We are so distracted by the creation that we cannot see the Creator. But there is a way out, and that is the spiritual journey.

We learned from Imam Husayn (a) that the fastest way to free ourselves from distractions is *jadbh*: a strong yearning that God puts in our hearts, enabling us to break free from those things that hold them back. This yearning is a taste of what a reunion with God would feel like, and it is so sweet that the one who tastes it wishes for nothing else afterwards.

Through yearning, we will gradually reach a stage whereby distractions fade and all that remains is God. Before we saw the creation but could not see God; now all we see is God. His light shines so brightly that everything else fades into obscurity. This is the kind of experience that we all can - and should - have. Meeting God feels like finding our way back home, like being reunited with the beloved after many years

of separation. Meeting God is the answer to all we want and is what we have been looking for in everything we have been doing.

We do not need to go on this journey alone: God is the one who takes us. All we need to do is to choose God, and ask Him to help us better feel His love.



Bibliography

Daylamī, Ḥasan ibn Muhammad, (1412 A.H.), *Irshād al-Qulūb,* (Qum: al-Sharīf al-Raḍī)

Fayḍ Kāshānī, Muhammad, (1417 A.H.), *Mahajjah al-Bayḍā',* (Qum: Mu'assisah al-Nashr al-Islāmī)

Ibn Qūlawayh, Ja'far, (1977), *Kāmil al-Zīyārāt,* (Najaf: Dār al-Murtaẓawīyah)

Kulaynī, Muhammad ibn Yaqūb, (1407 A.H.), *al-Kāfī,* (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah)

Sharīf al-Raḍī, Muhammad, (1414 A.H.) *Nahj al-Balāghah (li Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ),* (Qum: Hijrat)

Sharīf al-Raḍī, Muhammad, (1406 A.H.), *Khaṣā'ṣ al-A'immah (a),* (Mashhad: Astān Quds)

Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, Ali ibn Mūsā, *Al-Luhūf 'alā Qatlā al-Ṭufūf,* (Qum: Anwār al-Mahdī)

Warrām Ibn Abī Farās, (1410 A.H.), *Majmū'ah Warrām* (Qum: Maktabah Faqīh)

Tustarī, Nūrllāh, (1409 A.H.), *Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq,* (Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashī al-Najafī)

Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, (1403 A.H.), *Biḥār al-Anwār,* (Beirut: Dār 'Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Araba)



The Full Text of Du'a 'Arafah

دعاء الإمام الحسين (عليه السلام) يوم عرفة

اَلْحَمْدُ للهِ الَّذى لَيسَ لِقَضآئِهِ دافِعٌ، وَلا لِعَطائِهِ مانِعٌ، وَلا كَصُنْعِهِ صُنْعُ صانِعٍ، وَهُوَ الْجَوادُ الْواسِعُ، فَطَرَ اَجْناسَ الْبَدائِعِ، واَتْقَنَ بِحِكْمَتِهِ الصَّنائِعَ، لا تَخْفى عَلَيهِ الطَّلايعُ، وَلا تَضيعُ عِنْدَهُ الْوَدائِعُ، جازى كُلِّ صانِعٍ، وَرائِشُ كُلِّ قانعٍ، وَراحِمُ كُلِّ ضارِعٍ، وَمُنْزِلُ الْمَنافِعِ، وَالْكِتابِ الْجامِعِ بِالنُّورِ السَّاطِعِ، وَ هُوَ لِلدَّعَواتِ سامِعٌ، وَلِلْكُرُباتِ دافِعٌ، وَلِلدَّرَجاتِ رافِعٌ، وَلِلْجَبابِرَةِ قامِعٌ، فَلا اِلهَ غَيرُهُ وَلا شَىْءَ يَعْدِلُهُ وَلَيسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَىْءٌ، وَهُوَ السَّميعُ الْبَصيرُ،اللَّطيفُ الْخَبيرُ، وَهُوَ عَلى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَديرٌ

اَللّهُمَّ اِنىّ اَرْغَبُ اِلَيكَ، وَاَشْهَدُ بِالرُّبُوبِيةِ لَكَ، مُقِرّاً بِاَنَّكَ رَبّى، وَ اِلَيكَ مَرَدّى، اِبْتَدَاْتَنى بِنِعْمَتِكَ قَبْلَ اَنْ اَكُونَ شَيئاً مَذْكُوراً، وَخَلَقْتَنى مِنَ التُّرابِ، ثُمَّ اَسْكَنْتَنِى الْاَصْلابَ، آمِناً لِرَيبِ الْمَنُونِ، وَاخْتِلافِ الدُّهُورِ وَالسِّنينَ، فَلَمْ اَزَلْ ظاعِناً مِنْ صُلْبٍ اِلى رَحِمٍ فى تَقادُمٍ مِنَ الْاَيامِ الْماضِيةِ، وَالْقُرُونِ الْخالِيةِ، لَمْ تُخْرِجْنى لِرَاْفَتِكَ بى وَلُطْفِكَ لى وَاِحْسانِكَ اِلَىَّ فى دَوْلَةِ اَئِمَّةِ الْكُفْرِ الَّذينَ نَقَضُوا عَهْدَكَ، وَكَذَّبُوا رُسُلَكَ، لكِنَّكَ اَخْرَجْتَنى لِلَّذى سَبَقَ لى مِنَ الْهُدَى الَّذى لَهُ يسَّرْتَنى، وَفيهِ اَنْشَاْتَنى، وَمِنْ قَبْلِ ذلِكَ رَؤُفْتَ بى بِجَميلِ صُنْعِكَ، وَسَوابِغِ نِعَمِكَ، فَابْتَدَعْتَ خَلْقى مِنْ مَنِىٍ يمْنى، وَاَسْكَنْتَنى فى ظُلُماتٍ ثَلاثٍ بَينَ لَحْمٍ وَدَمٍ وَجِلْدٍ، لَمْ تُشْهِدْنى خَلْقى، وَلَمْ تَجْعَلْ اِلَىَّ شَيئاً مِنْ اَمْرى، ثُمَّ اَخْرَجْتَنى لِلَّذى سَبَقَ لى مِنَ الْهُدى اِلَى الدُّنْيا تآمّاً سَوِياً، وَحَفِظْتَنى فِى الْمَهْدِ طِفْلاً صَبِياً، وَرَزَقْتَنى مِنَ الْغِذآءِ لَبَناً مَرِياً، وَعَطَفْتَ عَلَىَّ قُلُوبَ الْحَواضِنِ، وَكَفَّلْتَنى الْاُمَّهاتِ الرَّواحِمَ، وَكَلَاْتَنى مِنْ طَوارِقِ الْجآنِّ، وَسَلَّمْتَنى مِنَ الزِّيادَةِ

وَالنُّقْصانِ، فَتَعالَيتَ يا رَحيمُ يا رَحْمنُ، حتّى إذا اسْتَهْلَلْتُ ناطِقاً بِالْكلامِ، اَتْمَمْتَ عَلَيَّ سَوابغَ الْإنْعامِ، وَرَبَّيْتَنى زايداً فى كلِّ عامٍ، حَتّى إذا اكتَمَلَتْ فِطْرَتى، وَاعْتَدَلَتْ مِرَّتى، اَوْجَبْتَ عَلَيَّ حُجَتَّك بِاَنْ اَلْهَمْتَنى مَعْرِفَتَك، وَرَوَّعْتَنى بِعَجائِبِ حِكمَتِك، وَاَيقَظْتَنى لِما ذَرَأْتَ فى سَمآئِكوَاَرْضِك مِنْ بَدائِعِ خَلْقِك، وَنَبَّهْتَنى لِشُكرِك وَذِكرِك، وَاَوجَبْتَ عَلَيَّ طاعَتَك وَعِبادَتَك، وَفَهَّمْتَنى ما جاءَتْ بِهِ رُسُلُك، وَيسَّرْتَ لى تَقَبُّلَ مَرْضاتِك، وَمَنَنْتَ عَلَيَّ فى جَميعِ ذلِك بِعَونِك وَلُطْفِك

ثُمَّ إذْ خَلَقْتَنى مِنْ خَيرِ الثَّرى، لَمْ تَرْضَ لى يا اِلهى نِعْمَةً دُونَ اُخرى، وَرَزَقْتَنى مِنْ اَنواعِ الْمَعاشِ، وَصُنُوفِ الرِّياشِ، بِمَنِّك الْعَظيمِ الْأَعْظَمِ عَلَيَّ، وَاِحْسانِك الْقَديمِ اِلَيَّ، حَتّى إذا اَتْمَمْتَ عَلَيَّ جَميعَ النِّعَمِ، وَصَرَفْتَ عَنّى كلَّ النِّقَمِ، لَمْ يمْنَعْك جَهْلى وَجُرْأَتى عَلَيك، اَنْ دَلَلْتَنى اِلى ما يقَرِّبُنى اِلَيك، وَوَفَّقْتَنى لِما يزْلِفُنى لَدَيك، فَاِنْ دَعَوْتُك اَجَبْتَنى، وَاِنْ سَئَلْتُك اَعْطَيتَنى، وَاِنْ اَطَعْتُك شَكرْتَنى، وَاِنْ شَكرْتُك زِدْتَنى، كلُّ ذلِك اِكمالٌ لِأَنْعُمِك عَلَيَّ وَاِحْسانِك اِلَيَّ، فَسُبْحانَك سُبْحانَك مِنْ مُبْدِئٍ مُعيدٍ حَميدٍ مَجيدٍ، تَقَدَّسَتْ اَسْمآؤُك، وَعَظُمَتْ آلآؤُك، فَأَيُّ نِعَمِك يا اِلهى اُحْصى عَدَداً وَذِكراً، اَمْ اَىُّ عَطاياك أَقُومُ بِها شُكراً، وَهِيَ يا رَبِّ اَكثَرُ مِنْ اَنْ يحْصِيهَا الْعآدّوُنَ، أَوْ يبْلُغَ عِلْماً بِهَا الْحافِظُونَ، ثُمَّ ما صَرَفْتَ وَدَرَأْتَ عَنّى اَللّهُمَّ مِنَ الضُرِّ وَالضَّرّآءِ، أَكثَرُ مِمّا ظَهَرَ لى مِنَ الْعافِيةِ وَالسَّرّآءِ

وَاَنَا اَشْهَدُ يا اِلهى بِحَقيقَةِ ايمانى، وَعَقْدِ عَزَماتِ يقينى، وَخالِصِ صَريحِ تَوْحيدى، وَباطِنِ مَكنُونِ ضَميرى، وَعَلائِقِ مَجارى نُورِ بَصَرى، وَاَساريرِ صَفْحَةِ جَبينى، وَخُرْقِ مَسارِبِ نَفْسى، وَخَذاريفِ مارِنِ عِرْنينى، وَمَسارِبِ سِماخِ سَمْعى، وَما ضُمَّتْ

وَاَطْبَقَتْ عَلَيهِ شَفَتاىَ، وَحَرَكاتِ لَفْظِ لِسانى، وَمَغْرَزِ حَنَكَ فَمى وَفَكى، وَمَنابِتِ اَضْراسى، وَمَساغِ مَطْعَمى وَمَشْرَبى، وَحِمالَةِ اُمّ رَأْسى، وَبُلُوعِ فارِغِ حَبآئِلِ عُنُقى، وَمَا اشْتَمَلَ عَلَيهِ تامُورُ صَدْرى، وَحمائِلِ حَبْلِ وَتينى،وَنِياطِ حِجابِ قَلْبى، وَأَفْلاذِ حَواشى كَبِدى، وَما حَوَتْهُ شَراسيفُ اَضْلاعى وَحِقاقُ مَفاصِلى، وَقَبضُ عَوامِلى، وَاَطرافُ اَنامِلى، وَلَحْمى وَدَمى، وَشَعْرى وَبَشَرى، وَعَصَبى وَقَصَبى، وَعِظامى وَمُخّى وَعُرُوقى، وَجَميعُ جَوارِحى، وَمَا انْتَسَجَ عَلى ذلِكَ اَيامَ رِضاعى، وَما اَقلَّتِ الْأَرْضُ مِنّى، وَنَوْمى وَيقَظَتى وَسُكونى، وَحَرَكاتِ رُكوعى وَسُجودى، اَنْ لَوْ حاوَلْتُ وَاجْتَهَدْتُ مَدَى الْأَعصارِ وَالْأَحْقابِ لَوْ عُمِّرْتُها اَنْ اُؤَدِّىَ شُكرَ واحِدَةٍ مِنْ أَنْعُمِك مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ ذلِك، اِلاَّ بِمَنِّك الْمُوجَبِ عَلَىَّ بِهِ شُكرُك اَبَداً جَديداً، وَثَنآءً طارِفاً عَتيداً اَجَلْ، وَلوْ حَرَصْتُ اَنَا وَالْعادُّونَ مِنْ اَنامِك أَنْ نُحْصِىَ مَدى اِنْعامِك سالِفِهِ وَ انِفِهِ، ما حَصَرْناهُ عَدَداً، وَلا اَحْصَيناهُ اَمَداًهَيهاتَ اَنّى ذلِك، وَاَنْتَ الْمُخْبِرُ فى كتابِك النّاطِقِ، وَالنَّبَأِ الصّادِقِ ﴿وَاِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللهِ لا تُحْصُوها﴾، صَدَقَ كتابُك اَللّهُمَّ وَاِنْبآؤُك، وَبَلَّغَتْ اَنْبيآؤُك وَرُسُلُك ما اَنْزَلْتَ عَلَيهِمْ مِنْ وَحْيك، وَشَرَعْتَ لَهُمْ وَبِهِمْ مِنْ دينِك، غَيرَ اَنّى يا اِلهى اَشْهَدُ بِجَهْدى وَجِدّى، وَمَبْلَغِ طاعَتى وَوُسْعى، وَاَقُولُ مُؤْمِناً مُوقِناً، اَلْحَمْدُ للهِ الَّذى لَمْ يتَّخِذْ وَلَداً فَيكونَ مَوْرُوثاً، وَلَمْ يكنْ لَهُ شَريك فى مُلْكهِ فَيضآدَّهُ فيما ابْتَدَعَ، وَلا وَلِىٌّ مِنَ الذُّلِّ فَيرْفِدَهُ فيما صَنَعَ، فَسُبْحانَهُ سُبْحانَهُ ﴿لَوْ كانَ فيهِما الِهَةٌ اِلَّا اللهُ لَفَسَدَتا وَتَفَطَّرَتا﴾، سُبْحانَ اللهِ الْواحِدِ الْأَحَدِ الصَّمَدِ، الَّذى لَمْ يلِدْ وَلَمْ يولَدْ، وَلَمْ يكنْ لَهُ كفُواً اَحَدٌ، اَلْحَمْدُ للهِ حَمْداً يعادِلُ حَمْدَ مَلآئِكتِهِ الْمُقَرَّبينَ، وَاَنْبيآئِهِ الْمُرْسَلينَ، وَصَلَّى اللهُ عَلى خِيرَتِهِ مُحَمَّدٍ خاتَمِ النَّبِيينَ، وَآلِهِ الطَّيِّبينَ الطّاهِرينَ الْمُخلَصينَ وَسَلَّمَ

Imam Husayn (a) continued the du'a with tears in his eyes. Imam's words were so genuine. They were coming directly from his heart:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِى اَخْشاكَ كاَنِّى اَراكَ، وَاَسْعِدْنى بِتَقويكَ، وَلا تُشْقِنِى بِمَعْصِيَتِكَ، وَخِرْلى فى قَضآئِكَ، وَبارِكْ لى فى قَدَرِكَ، حَتّٰى لا اُحِبَّ تَعْجيلَ ما اَخَّرْتَ وَلا تَأْخيرَ ما عَجَّلْتَ، اَللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْ غِناىَ فى نَفْسى، وَالْيَقينَ فى قَلْبى، وَالْإِخْلاصَ فى عَمَلى، وَالنُّورَ فى بَصَرى، وَالْبَصيرَةَ فى دينى، وَمَتِّعْنى بِجَوارِحى، وَاجْعَلْ سَمْعى وَبَصَرى اَلْوارِثَيْنِ مِنّى وَانْصُرْنى عَلى مَنْ ظَلَمَنى، وَاَرِنى فيهِ ثارى وَمَأْرِبى، وَاَقِرَّ بِذٰلِكَ عَينى، اَللّٰهُمَّ اكْشِفْ كُرْبَتى، وَاسْتُرْ عَوْرَتى، وَاغْفِرْ لى خَطيئَتى، وَاخْسَأْ شَيطانى، وَفُكَّ رِهانى، وَاْجَعْلْ لى يا اِلٰهى، الدَّرَجَةَ الْعُلْيا فِى الْأٰخِرَةِ وَالْأُوْلى، اَللّٰهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ كما خَلَقْتَنى، فَجَعَلْتَنى سَميعاً بَصيراً، وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ كما خَلَقْتَنى، فَجَعَلْتَنى خَلْقاً سَوِياً رَحْمَةً بى، وَقَدْ كُنْتَ عَنْ خَلْقى غَنِياً

رَبِّ بِما بَرَأْتَنى فَعَدَّلْتَ فِطْرَتى، رَبِّ بِما اَنْشَأْتَنى فَاَحْسَنْتَ صُورَتى، رَبِّ بِما اَحْسَنْتَ اِلَىَّ وَفى نَفْسى عافَيْتَنى، رَبِّ بِما كَلَأْتَنى وَوَفَّقْتَنى، رَبِّ بِما اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَىَّ فَهَدَيْتَنى، رَبِّ بِما اَوْلَيْتَنى وَمِنْ كُلِّ خَيرٍ اَعْطَيْتَنى، رَبِّ بِما اَطْعَمْتَنى وَسَقَيْتَنى، رَبِّ بِما اَغْنَيْتَنى وَاَقْنَيْتَنى، رَبِّ بِما اَعَنْتَنى وَاَعْزَزْتَنى رَبِّ بِما اَلْبَسْتَنى مِنْ سِتْرِكَ الصّافى، وَيَسَّرْتَ لى مِنْ صُنْعِكَ الْكافى صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ الِ مُحَمَّدٍ، وَاَعِنّى عَلى بَوآئِقِ الدُّهُورِ، وَصُرُوفِ اللَّيالى وَالْأَيامِ، وَنَجِّنى مِنْ اَهْوالِ الدُّنْيا وَكُرُباتِ الْأٰخِرَةِ وَاكْفِنى شَرَّ ما يَعْمَلُ الظّالِمُونَ فِى الْأَرْضِ، اَللّٰهُمَّ ما اَخافُ فَاكْفِنى وَما اَحْذَرُ فَقِنى، وَفى نَفْسى وَدينى فَاحْرُسْنى، وَفى سَفَرى فَاحْفَظْنى وَفى اَهْلى وَمالى فَاخْلُفْنى، وَفيما رَزَقْتَنى فَبارِكْ لى، وَفى نَفْسى

فَذَلِّلْنى، وَفى اَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ فَعَظِّمْنى، وَمِنْ شَرِّ الْجِنِ وَالْإِنْسِ فَسَلِّمْنى، وَبِذُنُوبى فَلا تَفْضَحْنى، وَبِسَريرَتى فَلا تُخْزِنى، وَبِعَمَلى فَلا تَبْتَلِنى، وَنِعَمَكَ فَلا تَسْلُبْنى، وَاِلى غَيرِكَ فَلا تَكلْنى، اِلهى اِلى مَنْ تَكلُنى، اِلى قَريبٍ فَيقْطَعُنى، اَمْ اِلى بَعيدٍ فَيتَجَهَّمُنى، اَمْ اِلَى الْمُسْتَضْعَفينَ لى وَاَنْتَ رَبّى، وَمَليكُ اَمْرى اَشْكو اِلَيكَ غُرْبَتى، وَبُعْدَ دارى، وَهَوانى عَلى مَنْ مَلَّكْتَهُ اَمْرى، اِلهى فَلا تُحْلِلْ عَلَىَ غَضَبَكَ، فَاِنْ لَمْ تَكنْ غَضِبْتَ عَلَىَّ فَلا اُبالى سِواكَ ما سُبْحانَكَ غَيرَ اَنَّ عافِيتَكَ اَوْسَعُ لى، فَاَسْئَلُكَ يا رَبِّ بِنُورِ وَجْهِكَ الَّذى اَشْرَقَتْ لَهُ الْأَرْضُ وَالسَّمواتُ، وَكشِفَتْ بِهِ الظُّلُماتُ، وَصَلَحَ بِهِ اَمْرُ الْأَوَّلينَ وَالْأخِرينَ، اَنْ لا تُميتَنى عَلى غَضَبِكَ وَلا تُنْزِلْ بى سَخَطَكَ لَكَ الْعُتْبى لَكَ الْعُتْبى حَتّى تَرْضى قَبْلَ ذلِكَ

لا اِلهَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ، رَبَّ الْبَلَدِ الْحَرامِ، وَالْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرامِ، وَالْبَيتِ الْعَتيقِ الَّذى اَحْلَلْتَهُ الْبَرَكةَ، وَجَعَلْتَهُ لِلنَّاسِ اَمْناً، يا مَنْ عَفا عَنْ عَظيمِ الذُّنُوبِ بِحِلْمِهِ، يا مَنْ اَسْبَغَ النَّعْماءَ بِفَضْلِهِ، يا مَنْ اَعْطَى الْجَزيلَ بِكرَمِهِ، يا عُدَّتى فى شِدَّتى، يا صاحِبى فى وَحْدَتى، يا غِياثى فى كرْبَتى، يا وَلِيى فى نِعْمَتى، يا اِلهى وَاِلهَ آبائى اِبْراهيمَ وَاِسْماعيلَ وَاِسْحقَ وَيعْقُوبَ، وَرَبَّ جَبْرَئيلَ وَميكائيلَ وَاِسْرافيلَ، وَربَّ مُحَمَّدٍ خاتِمِ النَّبِيينَ، وَ الِهِ الْمُنْتَجَبينَ، وَمُنْزِلَ التَّورية وَالْإِ نْجيلِ وَالزَّبُورِ وَالْفُرْقانِ، وَمُنَزِّلَ كهيعص وَطه وَيس وَالْقُرآنِ الْحَكيمِ، اَنْتَ كهْفى حينَ تُعْيينِى الْمَذاهِبُ فى سَعَتِها، وَتَضيقُ بِىَ الْأَرْضُ بِرُحْبِها، وَلَوْلا رَحْمَتُكَ لَكنْتُ مِنَ الْهالِكينَ، وَاَنْتَ مُقيلُ عَثْرَتى، وَلَوْلا سَتْرُكَ اِياىَ لَكنْتُ مِنَ الْمَفْضُوحينَ، وَاَنْتَ مُؤَيدى بِالنَّصْرِ عَلى اَعْدآئى، وَلَوْلا نَصْرُكَ اِياىَ لَكنْتُ مِنَ الْمَغْلُوبينَ

يا مَنْ خصَّ نَفْسَهُ بِالسُّمُوِّ وَالرِّفْعَةِ، فَأَوْلِيآئُهُ بِعِزِّهِ يعْتَزُّونَ، يا مَنْ جَعَلَتْ لَهُ الْمُلوُك نيرَ الْمَذَلَّةِ عَلى اَعْناقِهِمْ فَهُمْ مِنْ سَطَواتِهِ خائِفُونَ، يعْلَمُ خائِنَةَ الْأَعْينِ وَما تُخْفِى الصُّدُورُ، وَ غَيبَ ما تَأْتى بِهِ الْأَزْمِنَةُ وَالدُّهُورُ يا مَنْ لا يعْلَمُ كيفَ هُوَ اِلاَّ هُوَ، يا مَنْ لا يعْلَمُ ما هُوَ اِلاَّ هُوَ، يا مَنْ لا يعْلَمُهُ اِلاَّ هُوَ، يا مَنْ كبَسَ الْأَرْضَ عَلَى الْمآءِ، وَسَدَّ الْهَوآءَ بِالسَّمآءِ يا مَنْ لَهُ اَكرَمُ الْأَسْماءِ يا ذَاالْمَعْرُوفِ الَّذى لا ينْقَطِعُ اَبَداً، يا مُقَيضَ الرَّكبِ لِيوسُفَ فِى الْبَلَدِ الْقَفْرِ، وَمُخْرِجَهُ مِنَ الْجُبِّ، وَجاعِلَهُ بَعْدَ الْعُبُودِيةِ مَلِكاً، يا رادَّهُ عَلى يعْقُوبَ بَعْدَ اَنِ ابْيضَّتْ عَيناهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كظيمٌ، يا كاشِفَ الضُّرِّ وَالْبَلْوى عَنْ اَيوبَ، وَمُمْسِك يدَىْ اِبْرهيمَ عَنْ ذَبْحِ ابْنِهِ بَعْدَ كبَرِ سِنِّهِ وَفَنآءِ عُمُرِهِ، يا مَنِ اسْتَجابَ لِزَكرِيا فَوَهَبَ لَهُ يحْيى، وَلَمْ يدَعْهُ فَرْداً وَحيداً، يا مَنْ اَخْرَجَ يونُسَ مِنْ بَطْنِ الْحُوتِ، يا مَنْ فَلَقَ الْبَحْرَ لِبَنى اِسْرآئيلَ فَاَنْجاهُمْ، وَجَعَلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَجُنُودَهُ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقينَ، يا مَنْ اَرْسَلَ الرِّياحَ مُبَشِّراتٍ بَينَ يدَىْ رَحْمَتِهِ، يا مَنْ لَمْ يعْجَلْ عَلى مَنْ عَصاهُ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ، يا مَنِ اسْتَنْقَذَ السَّحَرَةَ مِنْ بَعْدِ طُولِ الْجُحُودِ، وَقَدْ غَدَوْا فى نِعْمَتِهِ يأْكلُونَ رِزْقَهُ وَيعْبُدُونَ غَيرَهُ وَقَدْ حآدُّوهُ وَنآدُّوهُ وَكذَّبُوا رُسُلَهُ

يا اَللَّهُ يا اَللَّهُ، يا بَدئُ يا بَديعُ، لا نِدَّلَك، يا دآئِماً لا نَفادَ لَك، يا حَياً حينَ لا حَىَّ، يا مُحْيىَ الْمَوْتى، يا مَنْ هُوَ قآئِمٌ عَلى كلِّ نَفْسٍ بِما كسَبَتْ، يا مَنْ قَلَّ لَهُ شُكرى فَلَمْ يحْرِمْنى، وَعَظُمَتْ خَطيئَتى فَلَمْ يفْضَحْنى، وَرَآنى عَلَى الْمَعاصى فَلَمْ يشْهَرْنى، يا مَنْ حَفِظَنى فى صِغَرى، يا مَنْ رَزَقَنى فى كبَرى، يا مَنْ اَياديهِ عِنْدى لا تُحْصى، وَنِعَمُهُ لا تُجازى، يا مَنْ عارَضَنى بِالْخَيرِ وَالْإِحْسانِ، وَعارَضْتُهُ بِالْإِسائَةِ وَالْعِصْيانِ، يا مَنْ هَدانى لِلْإيمانِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ اَعْرِفَ شُكرَ الْإِمْتِنانِ، يا مَنْ دَعَوْتُهُ

مَريضاً فَشَفانى، وَعُرْياناً فَكسانى، وَجائِعاً فَأَشْبَعَنى، وَعَطْشاناً فَأَرْوانى، وَذَليلاً فَأَعَزَّنى، وَجاهِلاً فَعَرَّفَنى، وَوَحيداً فَكَثَّرَنى، وَغائِباً فَرَدَّنى، وَمُقِلاًّ فَأَغْنانى، وَمُنْتَصِراً فَنَصَرَنى، وَغَنِياً فَلَمْ يسْلُبْنى، وَاَمْسَكتُ عَنْ جَميعِ ذلِك فَابْتَدَأَنى، فَلَك الْحَمْدُ وَالشُّكرُ، يا مَنْ اَقالَ عَثْرَتى، وَنَفَّسَ كرْبَتى، وَاَجابَ دَعْوَتى، وَسَتَرَ عَوْرَتى، وَغَفَرَ ذُنُوبى، وَبَلَّغَنى طَلِبَتى، وَنَصَرَنى عَلى عَدُوّى، وَاِنْ اَعُدَّ نِعَمَك وَمِنَنَك وَكرائِمَ مِنَحِك لا اُحْصيها

يا مَوْلاىَ اَنْتَ الَّذى مَنَنْتَ اَنْتَ الَّذى اَنْعَمْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى اَحْسَنْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى اَجْمَلْتَ اَنْتَ الَّذى اَفْضَلْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى اَكمَلْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى رَزَقْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى وَفَّقْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى اَعْطَيتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى اَغْنَيتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى اَقْنَيتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى اوَيتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى كفَيتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى هَدَيتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى عَصَمْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى سَتَرْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى غَفَرْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى اَقَلْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى مَكنْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى اَعْزَزْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى اَعَنْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى عَضَدْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى اَيدْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى نَصَرْتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى شَفَيتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى عافَيتَ، اَنْتَ الَّذى اَكرَمْتَ

تَبارَكتَ وَتَعالَيتَ، فَلَك الْحَمْدُ دآئِماً، وَلَك الشُّكرُ واصِباً اَبَداً، ثُمَّ اَنَا يا اِلهِىَ، الْمُعْتَرِفُ بِذُنُوبى، فَاغْفِرْها لى، اَنَا الَّذى اَسَأْتُ، اَنَا الَّذى اَخْطَأْتُ اَنَا الَّذى هَمَمْتُ، اَنَا الَّذى جَهِلْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى غَفَلْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى سَهَوْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى اعْتَمَدْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى تَعَمَّدْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى وَعَدْتُ، وَأَنَا الَّذِى أَخْلَفْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى نَكَثْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى أَقْرَرْتُ، أَنَا الَّذِى اعْتَرَفْتُ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَىَّ وَعِنْدِى وَأَبُوءُ بِذُنُوبِى فَاغْفِرْها لِى، يَا مَنْ لاتَضُرُّهُ

ذُنُوبُ عِبادِهِ وَهُوَ الْغَنِيُّ عَنْ طاعَتِهِمْ، وَالْمُوَفِّقُ مَنْ عَمِلَ صالِحاً مِنْهُمْ بِمَعُونَتِهِ وَرَحْمَتِهِ، فَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ إِلٰهِى وَسَيِّدِى

إِلٰهِى أَمَرْتَنِى فَعَصَيْتُكَ، وَنَهَيْتَنِى فَارْتَكَبْتُ نَهْيَكَ، فَأَصْبَحْتُ لاذا بَراءَةٍ لِى فَأَعْتَذِر، وَلَا ذا قُوَّةٍ فَأَنْتَصِر، فَبِأَيِّ شَيْءٍ أَسْتَقْبِلُكَ يا مَوْلاىَ؟ أَبِسَمْعِى؟ أَمْ بِبَصَرِى؟ أَمْ بِلِسانِى؟ أَمْ بِيَدِى؟ أَمْ بِرِجْلِى؟ أَلَيْسَ كُلُّها نِعَمَكَ عِنْدِى وَبِكُلِّها عَصَيْتُكَ يا مَوْلاىَ؟ فَلَكَ الْحُجَّةُ وَالسَّبِيلُ عَلَيَّ، يا مَنْ سَتَرَنِى مِنَ الْآباءِ وَالْأُمَّهاتِ أَنْ يَزْجُرُونِى، وَمِنَ الْعَشائِرِ وَالْإِخْوانِ أَنْ يُعَيِّرُونِى، وَمِنَ السَّلاطِينِ أَنْ يُعاقِبُونِى، وَلَوِ اطَّلَعُوا يا مَوْلاىَ عَلَىٰ مَا اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِ مِنِّى إِذاً مَا أَنْظَرُونِى، وَلَرَفَضُونِى وَقَطَعُونِى، فَها أَنا ذا يا إِلٰهِى، بَيْنَ يَدَيْكَ يا سَيِّدِى، خاضِعٌ ذَلِيلٌ حَصِيرٌ حَقِيرٌ، لا ذُو بَر آئَةٍ فَأَعْتَذِر، وَلا ذُو قُوَّةٍ فَأَنْتَصِر، وَلا حُجَّةٍ فَأَحْتَجَ بِها وَلا قائِلٌ لَمْ اَجْتَرِحْ، وَلَمْ اَعْمَلْ سُوءاً وَما عَسَى الْجُحُودَ، وَلَوْ جَحَدْتُ يا مَوْلاىَ يَنْفَعُنِى، كَيفَ وَاَنّىٰ ذلِك وَجَوارِحى كُلُّها شاهِدَةٌ عَلَيَّ بِما قَدْ عَمِلْتُ، وَعَلِمْتُ يَقِيناً غَيرَ ذِى شَك اَنَّك سائِلى مِنْ عَظائِمِ الْأُمُورِ، وَاَنَّك الْحَكَمُ الْعَدْلُ الَّذِى لا تَجُورُ، وَعَدْلُك مُهْلِكِى، وَمِنْ كلِّ عَدْلِك مَهْرَبِى، فَاِنْ تُعَذِّبْنِى يا اِلٰهِى فَبِذُنُوبِى بَعْدَ حُجَّتِك عَلَيَّ، وَاِنْ تَعْفُ عَنّى فَبِحِلْمِك وَجُودِك وَكَرَمِك، لا اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ، سُبْحانَك اِنّى كُنْتُ مِنَ الظّالِمِينَ، لا اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ، سُبْحانَك اِنّى كُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ، لا اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ، سُبْحانَك اِنّى كُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُوَحِّدِينَ، لا اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ، سُبْحانَك اِنّى كُنْتُ مِنَ الْخائِفِينَ، لا اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ، سُبْحانَك اِنّى كُنْتُ مِنَ الْوَجِلِينَ، لا اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ، سُبْحانَك اِنّى كُنْتُ مِنَ الرّاجِينَ، لا اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ، سُبْحانَك اِنّى كُنْتُ مِنَ الرّاغِبِينَ، لا اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ، سُبْحانَك اِنّى كُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُهَلِّلِينَ، لا اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ

اَنْتَ، سُبْحانَك اِنّى كُنْتُ مِنَ السّآئِلينَ، لا اِلهَ اِلاّ اَنْتَ، سُبْحانَك اِنّى كُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحينَ، لا اِلهَ اِلاّ اَنْتَ، سُبْحانَك اِنّى كُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُكبِّرينَ، لااِلهَ اِلاّ اَنْتَ، سُبْحانَك رَبّى وَرَبُّ ابآئِىَ الْأَوَّلينَ

اَللّهُمَ هذا ثَنائى عَلَيك مُمَجِّداً، وَاِخْلاصى لِذِكرِك مُوَحِّداً، وَاِقْرارى بِالائِك مُعَدِّداً، وَاِنْ كُنْتُ مُقِرّاً اَنّى لَمْ اُحْصِها لِكثْرَتِها وَسُبُوغِها وَتَظاهُرِها، وَتَقادُمِها اِلى حادِثٍ، ما لَمْ تَزَلْ تَتَعَهَّدُنى بِهِ مَعَها مُنْذُ خَلَقْتَنى وَبَرَأْتَنى مِنْ اَوَّلِ الْعُمْرِ مِنَ الْإِغْنآءِ مِنَ الْفَقْرِ، وَكشْفِ الضُّرِّ، وَتَسْبيبِ الْيسْرِ، وَدَفْعِ الْعُسْرِ، وَتَفريجِ الْكرْبِ، وَالْعافِيةِ فِى الْبَدَنِ، وَالسَّلامَةِ فِى الدّينِ، وَلَوْ رَفَدَنى عَلى قَدْرِ ذِكرِ نِعْمَتِك جَميعُ الْعالَمينَ مِنَ الْأَوَّلينَ وَالْأخِرينَ، ما قَدَرْتُ وَلاهُمْ عَلى ذلِك، تَقَدَّسْتَ وَتَعالَيتَ مِنْ رَبٍّ كريمٍ عَظيمٍ رَحيمٍ، لا تُحْصى الآؤُك، وَلا يبْلَغُ ثَناؤُك، وَلا تُكافى نَعْماؤُك، صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ الِ مُحَمَّدٍ، وَاَتْمِمْ عَلَينا نِعَمَك وَاَسْعِدْنا بِطاعَتِك سُبْحانَك لا اِلهَ اِلاّ اَنْتَ

اَللّهُمَ اِنَّك تُجيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ وَتَكشِفُ السُّوءَ، وَتُغيثُ الْمَكرُوبَ، وَتَشْفِى السَّقيمَ، وَتُغْنِى الْفَقيرَ، وَتَجْبُرُ الْكسيرَ، وَتَرْحَمُ الصَّغيرَ، وَتُعينُ الْكبيرَ، وَلَيسَ دُونَك ظَهيرٌ، وَلا فَوْقَك قَديرٌ، وَاَنْتَ الْعَلِىُّ الْكبيرُ، يا مُطْلِقَ الْمُكبَّلِ الْأَسيرِ، يا رازِقَ الطِّفْلِ الصَّغيرِ، يا عِصْمَةَ الْخآئِفِ الْمُسْتَجيرِ، يا مَنْ لا شَريك لَهُ وَلا وَزيرَ، صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ الِ مُحَمَّدٍ، وَاَعْطِنى فى هذِهِ الْعَشِيةِ اَفْضَلَ ما اَعْطَيتَ وَاَنَلْتَ اَحَداً مِنْ عِبادِك مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُوليها، وَ الاءٍ تُجَدِّدُها، وَبَلِيةٍ تَصْرِفُها، وَكرْبَةٍ تَكشِفُها، وَدَعْوَةٍ تَسْمَعُها، وَحَسَنَةٍ تَتَقَبَّلُها، وَسَيئَةٍ تَتَغَمَّدُها، اِنَّك لَطيفٌ بِما تَشآءُ خَبيرٌ، وَعَلى كلِّ شَىْءٍ قَديرٌ

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنَّكَ اَقْرَبُ مَنْ دُعِيَ، وَاَسْرَعُ مَنْ اَجابَ وَاَكْرَمُ مَنْ عَفى، وَاَوْسَعُ مَنْ اَعْطى، وَاَسْمَعُ مَنْ سُئِلَ، يا رَحمنَ الدُّنْيا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ وَرحيمَهُما، لَيسَ كَمِثْلِكَ مَسْئُولٌ، وَلا سِواكَ مَاْمُولٌ، دَعَوْتُكَ فَاَجَبْتَنى،وَسَئَلْتُكَ فَاَعْطَيْتَنى، وَرَغِبْتُ اِلَيكَ فَرَحِمْتَنى، وَوَثِقْتُ بِكَ فَنَجَّيْتَنى، وَفَزِعْتُ اِلَيكَ فَكَفَيْتَنى، اَللّٰهُمَ فَصَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّدٍ عَبْدِكَ، وَرَسُولِكَ وَنَبيكَ، وَعَلى الِهِ الطَّيِّبينَ الطّاهِرينَ اَجْمَعينَ، وَتَمِّمْ لَنا نَعْمآئَكَ، وَهَنِّئْنا عَطآئَكَ، وَاكْتُبْنا لَكَ شاكِرينَ، وَلِاٰلاٰئِكَ ذاكِرينَ، امينَ امينَ رَبَّ الْعالَمينَ، اَللّٰهُمَّ يا مَنْ مَلَكَ فَقَدَرَ، وَقَدَرَ فَقَهَرَ، وَعُصِيَ فَسَتَرَ، وَاسْتُغْفِرَ فَغَفَرَ، يا غايَةَ الطّالِبينَ الرّاغِبينَ وَمُنْتَهى اَمَلِ الرّاجينَ، يا مَنْ اَحاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْماً، وَوَسِعَ الْمُسْتَقيلينَ رَاْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَحِلْماً

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنّا نَتَوَجَّهُ اِلَيكَ فى هذِهِ الْعَشِيةِ الَّتى شَرَّفْتَها وَعَظَّمْتَها بِمُحَمَّدٍ نَبِيكَ وَرَسُولِكَ، وَخِيرَتِكَ مِنْ خَلْقِكَ، وَاَمينِكَ عَلى وَحْيكَ، الْبَشيرِ النَّذيرِ، السِّراجِ الْمُنيرِ، الَّذى اَنْعَمْتَ بِهِ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمينَ، وَ جَعَلْتَهُ رَحْمَةً لِلْعالَمينَ، اَللّٰهُمَّ فَصَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ الِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كما مُحَمَّدٌ اَهْلٌ لِذلِكَ مِنْكَ، يا عَظيمُ فَصَلِّ عَلَيهِ وَعَلى الِهِ الْمُنْتَجَبينَ الطَّيِّبينَ الطّاهِرينَ اَجْمَعينَ، وَتَغَمَّدْنا بِعَفْوِكَ عَنّا، فَاِلَيكَ عَجَّتِ الْاَصْواتُ بِصُنُوفِ اللُّغاتِ، فَاجْعَلْ لَنا اَللّٰهُمَّ فى هذِهِ الْعَشِيةِ نَصيباً مِنْ كُلِّ خَيرٍ تَقْسِمُهُ بَينَ عِبادِكَ، وَنُورٍ تَهْدى بِهِ وَرَحْمَةٍ تَنْشُرُها، وَبَرَكَةٍ تُنْزِلُها، وَعافِيةٍ تُجَلِّلُها، وَرِزْقٍ تَبْسُطُهُ، يا اَرْحَمَ الرّاحِمينَ، اَللّٰهُمَّ اَقْلِبْنا فى هذَا الْوَقْتِ مُنْجِحينَ مُفْلِحينَ مَبْرُورينَ غانِمينَ، وَلاتَجْعَلْنا مِنَ الْقانِطينَ، وَلا تُخْلِنا مِنْ رَحْمَتِكَ، وَلا تَحْرِمْنا ما نُؤَمِّلُهُ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ، وَلا تَجْعَلْنا مِنْ رَحْمَتِكَ مَحْرُومينَ، وَلا لِفَضْلِ ما نُؤَمِّلُهُ مِنْ عَطآئِكَ قانِطينَ، وَلا تَرُدَّنا خائِبينَ، وَلا مِنْ بابِكَ مَطْرُودينَ، يا اَجْوَدَ الْاَجْوَدينَ، وَاَكْرَمَ الْاَكْرَمينَ، اِلَيكَ اَقْبَلْنا مُوقِنينَ، وَلِبَيتِكَ الْحَرامِ امّينَ

قاصِدينَ، فَأَعِنَّا عَلى مَناسِكنا، وَأَكمِلْ لَنا حَجَّنا، وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَعافِنا، فَقَدْ مَدَدْنا إِلَيك أيدِينا، فَهِيَ بِذِلَّةِ الإِعْتِرافِ مَوْسُومَةٌ، اَللَّهُمَ فَأَعْطِنا فى هذِهِ الْعَشِيةِ ما سَئَلْناك، وَاكفِنا مَا اسْتَكفَيناك، فَلا كافِيَ لَنا سِواك، وَلا رَبَّ لَنا غَيرُك، نافِذٌ فينا حُكمُك، مُحيطٌ بِنا عِلْمُك، عَدْلٌ فينا قَضاؤُك، اِقْضِ لَنَا الْخَيرَ، وَاجْعَلْنا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْخَيرِ، اَللَّهُمَّ اَوْجِبْ لَنا بِجُودِك عَظيمَ الْأَجْرِ، وَكريمَ الذُّخْرِ، وَدَوامَ الْيسْرِ، وَاغْفِرْ لَنا ذُنُوبَنا اَجْمَعينَ، وَلا تُهْلِكنا مَعَ الْهالِكينَ، وَلا تَصْرِفْ عَنَّا رَأْفَتَك وَرَحْمَتَك يا اَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمينَ

اَللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنا فى هذَا الْوَقْتِ مِمَّنْ سَئَلَك فَاَعْطَيتَهُ، وَشَكرَك فَزِدْتَهُ، وَتابَ اِلَيك فَقَبِلْتَهُ، وَتَنَصَّلَ اِلَيك مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِ كلِّها فَغَفَرْتَها لَهُ، يا ذَاالْجَلالِ وَالْإِكرامِ، اَللَّهُمَّ وَنَقِّنا وَسَدِّدْنا وَاقْبَلْ تَضَرُّعَنا، يا خَيرَ مَنْ سُئِلَ، وَيا اَرْحَمَ مَنِ اسْتُرْحِمَ، يا مَنْ لا يخْفى عَلَيهِ اِغْماضُ الْجُفُونِ، وَلا لَحْظُ الْعُيونِ، وَلا مَا اسْتَقَرَّ فِى الْمَكنُونِ، وَلا مَا انْطَوَتْ عَلَيهِ مُضْمَراتُ الْقُلُوبِ، اَلا كلُّ ذلِك قَدْ اَحْصاهُ عِلْمُك، وَوَسِعَهُ حِلْمُك، سُبْحانَك وَتَعالَيتَ عَمَّا يقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ عُلُوّاً كبيراً، تُسَبِّحُ لَك السَّمواتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرَضُونَ وَمَنْ فيهِنَّ، وَاِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّايسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِك، فَلَك‌الْحَمْدُ وَالْمَجْدُ وَعُلُوُّ الْجَدِّ، يا ذَاالْجَلالِ وَالْإِكرامِ وَالْفَضْلِ وَالْإِنْعامِ، وَالْأَيادِى الْجِسامِ، وَاَنْتَ الْجَوادُ الْكريمُ الرَّؤُوفُ الرَّحيمُ، اَللَّهُمَّ اَوْسِعْ عَلَيَّ مِنْ رِزْقِك الْحَلالِ، وَعافِنِى فى بَدَنى وَدينى، وَ امِنْ خَوْفى، وَاَعْتِقْ رَقَبَتى مِنَ النَّارِ، اَللَّهُمَّ لا تَمْكرْ بى وَلا تَسْتَدْرِجْنى وَلا تَخْدَعْنى، وَادْرَءْ عَنّى شَرَّ فَسَقَةِ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ

At this point, Imam Husayn (a) looked up to the sky and, with eyes full of tears, called upon God:

يا أَسْمَعَ السَّامِعِينَ، يا أَبْصَرَ النَّاظِرِينَ، وَيا أَسْرَعَ الْحاسِبِينَ، وَيا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ، صَلِّ عَلى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ الِ مُحَمَّدٍ، السَّادَةِ الْمَيامِينِ، وَأَسْئَلُكَ اَللّٰهُمَّ حاجَتِيَ الَّتِي اِنْ اَعْطَيْتَنِيها لَمْ يَضُرَّنِي ما مَنَعْتَنِي وَاِنْ مَنَعْتَنِيها لَمْ يَنْفَعْنِي ما اَعْطَيْتَنِي، اَسْئَلُكَ فَكاكَ رَقَبَتِي مِنَ النَّارِ، لااِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اَنْتَ، وَحْدَكَ لاشَرِيكَ لَكَ، لَكَ الْمُلْكُ، وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ، وَاَنْتَ عَلى كُلِّشَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ، يا رَبِّ يا رَبِّ ...

Imam Husayn (a) repeated yā-rabbī so many times that he attracted the attention of all the others who, instead of praying for their own needs, gathered around the Imam to listen to him. They wept with him. They remained there at Mount 'Arafat till sunset.

In some sources, the du'a ends at this point. However, in his book, Iqbāl al-aʿmāl, Sayyid ibn Tawus, recorded the following part too:

اِلٰهِي اَنَا الْفَقِيرُ فِي غِنايَ، فَكَيْفَ لا اَكُونُ فَقِيراً فِي فَقْرِي، اِلٰهِي اَنَا الْجاهِلُ فِي عِلْمِي، فَكَيْفَ لا اَكُونُ جَهُولاً فِي جَهْلِي، اِلٰهِي اِنَّ اخْتِلافَ تَدْبِيرِكَ وَسُرْعَةَ طَوآءِ مَقادِيرِكَ، مَنَعا عِبادَكَ الْعارِفِينَ بِكَ عَنْ السُّكُونِ اِلى عَطآءٍ، وَالْيَأْسِ مِنْكَ فِي بَلآءٍ، اِلٰهِي مِنِّي ما يَلِيقُ بِلُؤْمِي، وَمِنْكَ ما يَلِيقُ بِكَرَمِكَ، اِلٰهِي وَصَفْتَ نَفْسَكَ بِاللُّطْفِ وَالرَّأْفَةِ لِي قَبْلَ وُجُودِ ضَعْفِي، اَفَتَمْنَعُنِي مِنْهُما بَعْدَ وُجُودِ ضَعْفِي، اِلٰهِي اِنْ ظَهَرَتِ الْمَحاسِنُ مِنِّي فَبِفَضْلِكَ، وَلَكَ الْمِنَّةُ عَلَيَّ، وَاِنْ ظَهَرَتِ الْمَساوِي مِنِّي فَبِعَدْلِكَ وَلَكَ الْحُجَّةُ عَلَيَّ، اِلٰهِي كَيْفَ تَكِلُنِي وَقَدْ تَكَفَّلْتَ لِي، وَكَيْفَ اُضامُ وَاَنْتَ النَّاصِرُ لِي، اَمْ كَيْفَ اَخِيبُ وَاَنْتَ الْحَفِيُّ بِي، ها اَنَا اَتَوَسَّلُ اِلَيْكَ بِفَقْرِي اِلَيْكَ، وَكَيْفَ اَتَوَسَّلُ اِلَيْكَ بِما

هُوَ مُحالٌ اَنْ يصِلَ اِلَيك، اَمْ كيفَ اَشْكوُ اِلَيك حالى وَهُوَ لا يخْفى عَلَيك، اَمْ كيفَ أُتَرْجِمُ بِمَقالى وَهُوَ مِنك بَرَزٌ اِلَيك، اَمْ كيفَ تُخَيبُ امالى وَهِىَ قَدْ وَفَدَتْ اِلَيك، اَمْ كيفَ لا تُحْسِنُ اَحْوالى وَبِك قامَتْ؟

اِلهى ما اَلْطَفَك بى مَعَ عَظيمِ جَهْلى، وَما اَرْحَمَك بى مَعَ قَبيحِ فِعْلى، اِلهى ما اَقْرَبَك مِنّى وَاَبْعَدَنى عَنْك، وَما اَرْاَفَك بى، فَمَا الَّذى يحْجُبُنى عَنْك، اِلهى عَلِمْتُ بِاخْتِلافِ الْآثارِ وَتَنَقُّلاتِ الْأَطْوارِ، اَنَّ مُرادَك مِنّى اَنْ تَتَعَرَّفَ اِلَىَّ فى كلِّشَىْءٍ، حَتّى لا اَجْهَلَك فى شَىْءٍ، اِلهى كلَّما اَخْرَسَنى لُؤْمى اَنْطَقَنى كرَمُك، وَكلَّما ايسَتْنى اَوْصافى اَطْمَعَتْنى مِنَنُك، اِلهى مَنْ كانَتْ مَحاسِنُهُ مَساوِئَ، فَكيفَ لا تَكونُ مَساويهِ مَساوِئَ، وَمَنْ كانَتْ حَقايقُهُ دَعاوِىَ، فَكيفَ لا تَكونُ دَعاويهِ دَعاوِىَ، اِلهى حُكمُك النّافِذُ،وَمَشِيتُك الْقاهِرَةُ، لَمْ يتْرُكا لِذى مَقالٍ مَقالاً، وَلا لِذى حالٍ حالاً، اِلهى كمْ مِنْ طاعَةٍ بَنَيتُها، وَحالَةٍ شَيدْتُها هَدَمَ اعْتِمادى عَلَيها عَدْلُك، بَلْ اَقالَنى مِنْها فَضْلُك، اِلهى اِنَّك تَعْلَمُ اَنّى وَاِنْ لَمْ تَدُمِ الطّاعَةُ مِنّى فِعْلاً جَزْماً، فَقَدْ دامَتْ مَحَبَّةً وَعَزْماً، اِلهى كيفَ اَعْزِمُ وَاَنْتَ الْقاهِرُ، وَكيفَ لا اَعْزِمُ وَاَنْتَ الْآمِرُ

اِلهى تَرَدُّدى فِى الْآثارِ يوجِبُ بُعْدَ الْمَزارِ فَاجْمَعْنى عَلَيك بِخِدْمَةٍ تُوصِلُنى اِلَيك، كيفَ يسْتَدَلُّ عَلَيك بِما هُوَ فى وُجُودِهِ مُفْتَقِرٌ اِلَيك، اَيكونُ لِغَيرِك مِنَ الظُّهُورِ ما لَيسَ لَك، حَتّى يكونَ هُوَ الْمُظْهِرَ لَك، مَتى غِبْتَ حَتّى تَحْتاجَ اِلى دَليلٍ يدُلُّ عَليك، وَمَتى بَعُدْتَ حَتّى تَكونَ الْآثارُ هِىَ الَّتى تُوصِلُ اِلَيك، عَمِيتْ عَينٌ لا تَراك عَلَيها رَقيباً، وَخَسِرَتْ صَفْقَةُ عَبْدٍ لَمْ تَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ حُبِّك نَصيباً

اِلهی اَمَرْتَ بِالرُّجُوعِ اِلَی الْأثارِ، فَارْجِعْنی اِلَیك بِكِسْوَةِ الْأَنْوارِ، وَهِدایَةِ الْإِسْتِبْصارِ، حَتّی اَرْجِعَ اِلَیك مِنْها، كما دَخَلْتُ اِلَیك مِنْها، مَصُونَ السِّرِّ عَنِ النَّظَرِ اِلَیها، وَمَرْفُوعَ الْهِمَّةِ عَنِ الْإِعْتِمادِ عَلَیها، اِنَّك عَلی كلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدیرٌ، اِلهی هذا ذُلّی ظاهِرٌ بَینَ یدَیك، وَهذا حالی لا یخْفی عَلَیك، مِنْك اَطْلُبُ الْوُصُولَ اِلَیك، وَبِك اَسْتَدِلُّ عَلَیك فَاهْدِنی بِنُورِك اِلَیك، وَاَقِمْنی بِصِدْقِ الْعُبُودِیةِ بَینَ یدَیك اِلهی عَلِّمْنی مِنْ عِلْمِك الْمَخْزُونِ، وَصُنّی بِسِتْرِك الْمَصُونِ، اِلهی حَقِّقْنی بِحَقائِقِ اَهْلِ الْقُرْبِ، وَاسْلُك بی مَسْلَك اَهْلِ الْجَذْبِ اِلهی اَغْنِنی بِتَدْبیرِك لی عَنْ تَدْبیری، وَبِاخْتِیارِك عَنِ اخْتِیاری، وَاَوْقِفْنی عَلی مَراكزِ اضْطِراری، اِلهی اَخْرِجْنی مِنْ ذُلِّ نَفْسی، وَطَهِّرْنی مِنْ شَكی وَشِرْكی، قَبْلَ حُلُولِ رَمْسی، بِك اَنْتَصِرُ فَانْصُرْنی، وَعَلَیك اَتَوَكلُ فَلا تَكلْنی، وَاِیاك اَسْئَلُ فَلا تُخَیبْنی، وَفی فَضْلِك اَرْغَبُ فَلا تَحْرِمْنی، وَبِجَنابِك اَنْتَسِبُ فَلا تُبْعِدْنی وَبِبابِك اَقِفُ فَلا تَطْرُدْنی

اِلهی تَقَدَّسَ رِضاك اَنْ یكونَ لَهُ عِلَّةٌ مِنْك، فَكیفَ یكونُ لَهُ عِلَّةٌ مِنّی، اِلهی اَنْتَ الْغَنِیُّ بِذاتِك اَنْ یصِلَ اِلَیك النَّفْعُ مِنْك، فَكیفَ لا تَكونُ غَنِیاً عَنّی، اِلهی اِنَّ الْقَضآءَ وَالْقَدَرَ یمَنّینی، وَاِنَّ الْهَوی بِوَثائِقِ الشَّهْوَةِ اَسَرَنی، فَكنْ اَنْتَ النَّصیرَ لی حَتّی تَنْصُرَنی وَتُبَصِّرَنی، وَاَغْنِنی بِفَضْلِك حَتّی اَسْتَغْنِیَ بِك عَنْ طَلَبی، اَنْتَ الَّذی اَشْرَقْتَ الْأَنْوارَ فی قُلُوبِ اَوْلِیآئِك، حَتّی عَرَفُوك وَوَحَّدُوك، وَاَنْتَ الَّذی اَزَلْتَ الْأَغْیارَ عَنْ قُلُوبِ اَحِبّائِك، حَتّی لَمْ یحِبُّوا سِواك، وَلَمْ یلْجَئُوا اِلی غَیرِك، اَنْتَ الْمُوْنِسُ لَهُمْ حَیثُ اَوْحَشَتْهُمُ الْعَوالِمُ، وَاَنْتَ الَّذی هَدَیتَهُمْ حَیثُ اسْتَبانَتْ لَهُمُ الْمَعالِمُ، ماذا وَجَدَ مَنْ فَقَدَك وَمَا الَّذی فَقَدَ مَنْ وَجَدَك، لَقَدْ خابَ مَنْ رَضِیَ دُونَك بَدَلاً، وَلَقَدْ خَسِرَ مَنْ بَغیٰ عَنْك

مُتَحَوِّلاً، كَيْفَ يُرْجىٰ سِواكَ وَأَنْتَ مَا قَطَعْتَ الْإِحْسانَ؟ وَكَيْفَ يُطْلَبُ مِنْ غَيْرِكَ وَأَنْتَ مَا بَدَّلْتَ عادَةَ الامْتِنانِ؟ يَا مَنْ أَذاقَ أَحِبَّاءَهُ حَلاوَةَ الْمُؤانَسَةِ فَقامُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مُتَمَلِّقِينَ، وَيَا مَنْ أَلْبَسَ أَوْلِياءَهُ مَلابِسَ هَيْبَتِهِ فَقامُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مُسْتَغْفِرِينَ، أَنْتَ الذَّاكِرُ قَبْلَ الذَّاكِرِينَ، وَأَنْتَ الْبادِئُ بِالإِحْسانِ قَبْلَ تَوَجُّهِ الْعابِدِينَ، وَأَنْتَ الْجَوادُ بِالْعَطاءِ قَبْلَ طَلَبِ الطَّالِبِينَ، وَأَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ثُمَّ لِما وَهَبْتَ لَنا مِنَ الْمُسْتَقْرِضِينَ

إِلٰهِى اطْلُبْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ حَتَّىٰ أَصِلَ إِلَيْكَ، وَاجْذِبْنِي بِمَنِّكَ حَتَّىٰ أُقْبِلَ عَلَيْكَ، إِلٰهِى إِنَّ رَجائِى لَايَنْقَطِعُ عَنْكَ وَإِنْ عَصَيْتُكَ، كَما أَنَّ خَوفِى لَايُزايِلُنِي وَ إِنْ أَطَعْتُكَ، فَقَدْ دَفَعَتْنِي الْعَوالِمُ إِلَيْكَ، وَقَدْ أَوْقَعَنِي عِلْمِى بِكَرَمِكَ عَلَيْكَ، إِلٰهِى كَيْفَ أَخِيبُ وَأَنْتَ أَمَلِى؟ أَمْ كَيْفَ أُهانُ وَعَلَيْكَ مُتَّكَلِى؟ إِلٰهِى كَيْفَ أَسْتَعِزُّ وَفِى الذِّلَّةِ أَرْكَزْتَنِى؟ أَمْ كَيْفَ لَا أَسْتَعِزُّ وَ إِلَيْكَ نَسَبْتَنِي؟ إِلٰهِى كَيْفَ لَاأَفْتَقِرُ وَأَنْتَ الَّذِى فِى الْفُقَراءِ أَقَمْتَنِى؟ أَمْ كَيْفَ أَفْتَقِرُ وَأَنْتَ الَّذِى بِجُودِكَ أَغْنَيْتَنِي؟ وَأَنْتَ الَّذِى لَاإِلٰهَ غَيْرُكَ تَعَرَّفْتَ لِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ فَما جَهِلَكَ شَىْءٌ، وَأَنْتَ الَّذِى تَعَرَّفْتَ إِلَيَّ فِى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ فَرَأَيْتُكَ ظاهِراً فِى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ، وَأَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ لِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ، يَا مَنِ اسْتَوىٰ بِرَحْمانِيَّتِهِ فَصارَ الْعَرْشُ غَيْباً فِى ذاتِهِ، مَحَقْتَ الْآثارَ بِالْآثارِ، وَمَحَوْتَ الْأَغْيارَ بِمُحِيطاتِ أَفْلاكِ الْأَنْوارِ، يَا مَنِ احْتَجَبَ فِى سُرادِقاتِ عَرْشِهِ عَنْ أَنْ تُدْرِكَهُ الْأَبْصارُ، يَا مَنْ تَجَلَّىٰ بِكَمالِ بَهائِهِ فَتَحَقَّقَتْ عَظَمَتُهُ مِنَ الاسْتِواءِ، كَيْفَ تَخْفىٰ وَأَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ؟ أَمْ كَيْفَ تَغِيبُ وَأَنْتَ الرَّقِيبُ الْحاضِرُ؟ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيرٌ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَحْدَهُ.